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Heroes of Dakota: Part Two

Elwyn B. Robinson
University of North Dakota

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HEROES OF DAKOTA

By

ELWYN B. ROBINSON

II

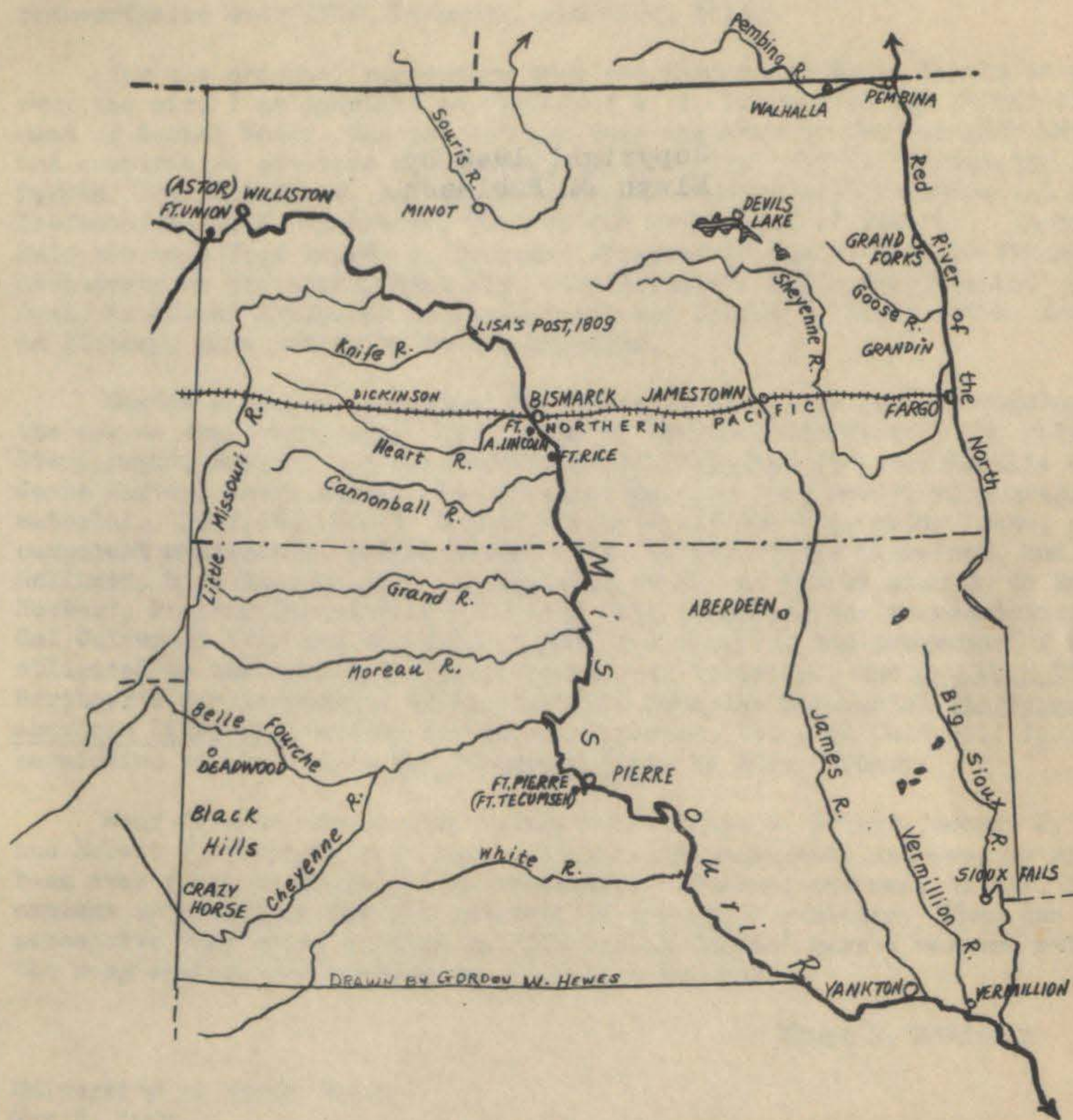


UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

HEROES OF DAKOTA

PART TWO

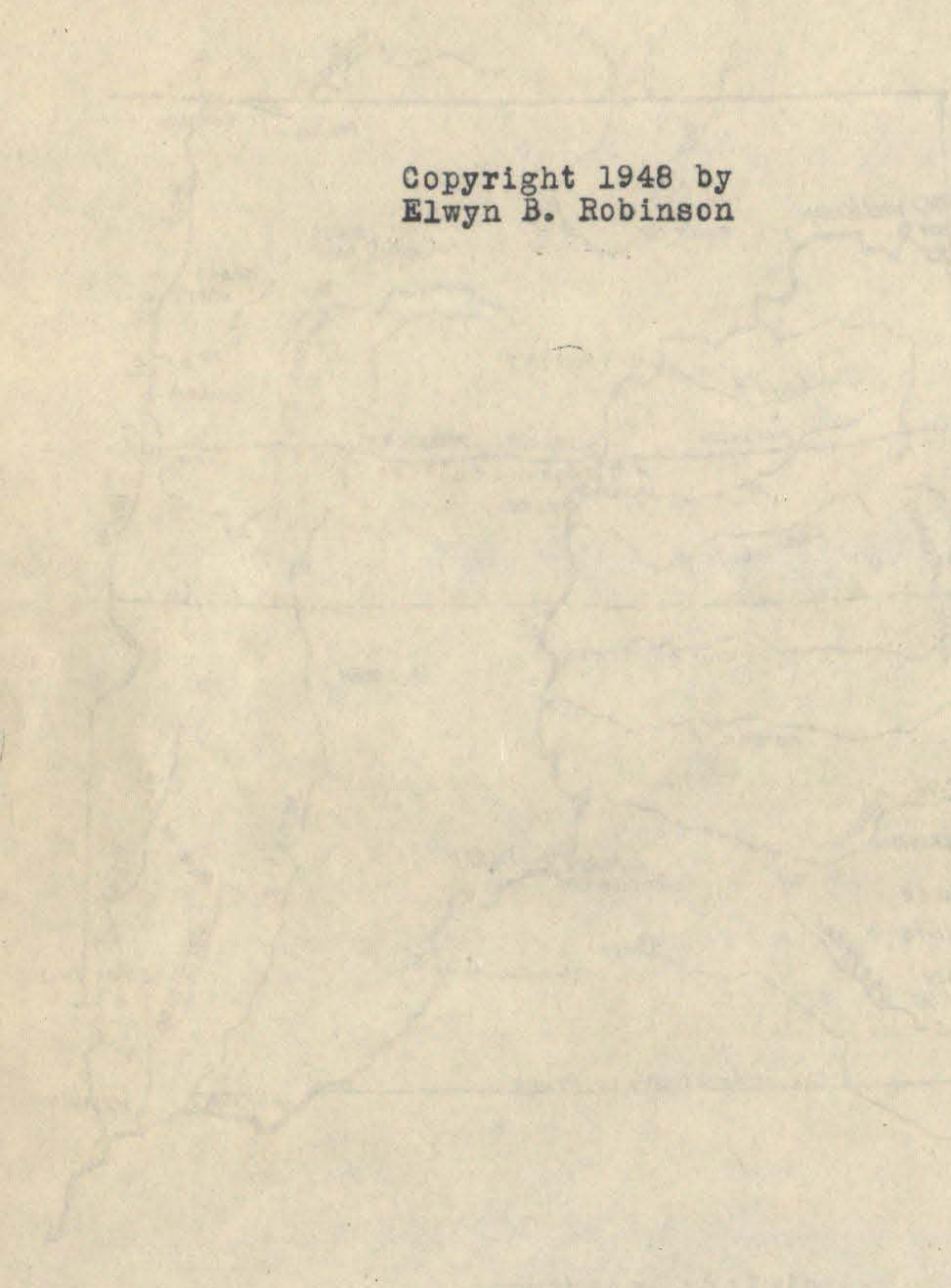
BY
ELWYN B ROBINSON, PH.D.



History Department
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota

1948

ROSES OF DAKOTA
SAKEE
GARY S. ROBINSON



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PREFACE

"Heroes of Dakota" began as a radio program over the University Station, KFJH, in the fall of 1947. This booklet contains the second series of broadcasts given in the spring of 1948. At the suggestion of Superintendent Garfield B. Nordrum and through the efforts of Deputy Superintendent M. F. Peterson of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, they were broadcast by transcription over KFJR, Bismarck, and KVNJ, Fargo.

For the original suggestion that the history of North Dakota be presented over the air, I am indebted to Professor A. L. Lincoln of the University Department of Social Work. The project has been assisted by the friendly interest and cooperative attitude of President John C. West of the University of North Dakota, Dean William G. Bek of the College of Science, Literature and Art, and Professor Felix J. Vondracek, Head of the Department of History. Important help has come from Andrew J. Kochman, Director of Radio, and the student announcers on his staff, Ross Alm, Donn Erickson, and Byron Thomson. Walter S. Losk, Assistant Professor of Journalism, and Robert L. Kirkpatrick, Instructor in History, gave publicity to the programs.

Gordon W. Hewes, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, drew the map on the title page. Miss Della K. Traynor, Director of the University Stenographic Bureau, and her capable staff, Julianne Johnson, Phyllis Galegher, Joyce Harvey, Marie Riggle, Beulah Anderson, and Inez Baker, mimeographed the material. Professor Joe W. Hughes, Director of the University Press, and his competent assistants, Bertha Brunk, R. A. Gilroy, Lloyd Mickelson, and Robert McKinnon, have been helpful on many occasions. My thanks also go to Ralph Herbert, Program Director of KILQ, for help in making the transcriptions, and to Cal Culver of KFJR and Ed Starr of KVNJ for carrying the programs. I am obligated to the American Council of Learned Societies, the New York Times, and Scribner's for permission to use material from the monumental Dictionary of American Biography, and to the Caxton Printers, Ltd., of Caldwell, Idaho, for permission to quote from The Checkered Years by Mary Cowdery.

Many friends, Professors Wilson Cape, Louis G. Geiger, George F. Lemmer, and Robert P. Wilkins, have lent valuable encouragement, and Eva, my wife, has been ever ready with thoughtful criticism. Finally, and most of all, I wish to express my gratitude for the interest of the radio audience. When one perceptive soul wrote in that the "Heroes of Dakota" were a welcome relief from the soap operas, the program was plainly a success.

Elwyn B. Robinson

University of North Dakota
May 3, 1948

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MANUEL LISA, FUR-TRADER

The Spaniard Manuel Lisa was the leading fur-trader on the Missouri River from 1807 to 1820 when he died. Bold, persistent of purpose, full of restless energy, he was a man of great ability. Thoroughly experienced in the Indian trade and customs, intensely active in his work, a good judge of men, yet he never seems to have commanded the confidence of his associates, though his great abilities were so recognized that he was selected to command nearly every expedition sent out from St. Louis by the companies of which he was a member. He had tact and nerve, and when necessary he could bluff.

Hiram M. Chittenden in his magnificent work, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, published by Francis P. Harper in 1902, has a splendid description of Lisa's character: he was, writes Chittenden, "as far the master of the art of conciliating the good will of the Indians as was any trader that ever ascended the river. He knew when to be gentle and when severe, and adroitly mingle with his protestations of friendship, demonstrations of his ability to defend himself. While smoking the pipe of peace he did not conceal the muskets of his followers, nor the more formidable swivels upon the boat. He knew the indispensable function of presents, and he was never niggardly in this respect where parsimony might mean ruin. In short he understood all the secret springs which actuate the savage mind, and with marvelous dexterity he played them so as always to avert catastrophe. His enemies accused him of going beyond the legitimate field of diplomacy and of warding off danger from his own head by directing it upon those of competing traders. Be that as it may, he never was caught in an Indian snare and never personally had serious difficulties with the savages."

Chittenden's work is the best on the fur trade and the best source on Manuel Lisa, but it is now very difficult to find. Easily available, however, is Everett Dick's Vanguards of the Frontier, published in 1941 by D. Appleton-Century Company. It has been recently reprinted under the title The Story of the Frontier, and contains a most interesting account not only of the fur trade but of every other aspect of the life of the West before settlement.

Manuel Lisa was born in New Orleans in 1772, of Spanish parents. His father was a native of Spain, but his mother, also of Spanish blood, was born in St. Augustine, Florida. When a lad of about eighteen he journeyed up the broad Mississippi to the French village of St. Louis, then with less than a thousand population, but already an outfitting point for the fur trade well up the Missouri and far out into the prairies.¹ In the years to come, though still a town of muddy streets, bad hotels, and a large floating population of traders, boatmen, and Indians, it grew into the great center of the western fur trade, the base of operations for all the fur companies, the starting point for expeditions up the Missouri, overland to the Rockies, and to Santa Fe.

¹ There is a good biographical sketch of Lisa by Irving B. Richman in the Dictionary of American Biography, XI, 291. This great collection in some twenty volumes was published by Scribners under the sponsorship of the American Council of Learned Societies and with the financial backing of the New York Times.

Though the Spaniard's early life is shadowy, we know that he soon entered the fur trade, becoming so well established that by 1800 the Spanish government gave him a monopoly of the trade with the Osage Indians.

In Lisa's day the traders went up the river with keelboats, large vessels averaging sixty to seventy-five feet long, fifteen to eighteen feet beam, and three to four feet depth of hold. Strong and substantially built, a keel ran from bow to stern, while a cargo box, cut off at each end twelve feet or so shorter than the boat, rose four or five feet from the deck. Generally the boat was pulled upstream by the cordelle, or long tow line, fastened to the top of a high mast and running through a ring attached to a short line from the bow. The mast enabled the line to clear brush along the shore as from twenty to forty brawny French Canadians toiled along the bank, pulling the boat some twelve or fifteen miles a day.

When the cordelle could not be used, as at river crossings, the French boatmen resorted to poling, thrusting their long poles into the bottom of the river and then with its knob in the hollow of their shoulder walking from bow to stern of the boat, thrusting it forward, and bending with the effort nearly parallel to the deck. When the water was too deep for poling, oars were used, and if the winds were favorable, a sail was hoisted. And so the keelboat worked and worried its way up the turbulent Missouri, sometimes a thousand miles or more into the heart of the Indian country.

The boatmen were usually French Canadians, one of these was considered worth three American frontiersmen at this work, and on the day of the departure they and their friends engaged in a drunken frolic. It was with difficulty that the start was made and the rollicking men gathered in from the last chance to carouse at the bourgeois's expense. At last the boats pushed off and Manuel Lisa encouraged his men to sing to keep them from thinking too deeply, for they would be gone perhaps a year or more and some never return.

The chief trader of the expedition was a bourgeois, a little dictator to his men, the venturesome, gaily-clad workmen were called engagés, while the crew of a boat was often referred to as a brigade. Greenhorns, going up the river for the first time, were mangeur de lard, or "pork-eaters," and they were given an initiation with much merriment and horse-play when the boat passed the mouth of the Platte, considered the dividing line between the Lower and Upper Missouri. The conventional fare of the men as they pushed up the stream was lyed corn, fat pork, and cornmeal mush, pieced out by game brought in by hunters. Probably a thousand men worked in the trade of the Upper Missouri in 1822, compared to five hundred on the Upper Mississippi.

The keelboat carried an outfit with goods for the Indian trade and to supply the trappers employed by the fur company. The following are items found on an invoice of trade goods in 1826: gunpowder, lead, three point blankets at \$9.00 each, scarlet cloth at \$6.00 a yard, butcher knives, flint-lock muskets at \$24.00 each, tin kettles, sheet iron kettles, beaver traps, sugar at \$1.00 a pound, coffee, raisins, thread, flannel, finger rings, rum, bridles, horse-shoes, buttons, dried fruit, moccasin awls, ribbons, handkerchiefs, flints, copper kettles, shaving soap, bracelets, brass wire, iron buckles, and looking glasses. Merchandise of this sort Lisa and others traded for profits ranging from 300 to 1900 per cent.

When Lewis and Clark returned in September, 1806, from their great expedition across the continent, Lisa was quick to realize the significance of the information that they brought back concerning the upper reaches of the Missouri. Seizing the trade opportunities thus revealed, he formed an association with William Morrison and Pierre Menard of Kaskaskia, Illinois, and in the spring of 1807 led an expedition of forty-two men over two thousand miles up the river. Passing first the Sioux and then the treacherous Aricaras whose hostility he turned aside with his usual tact and courage, he traversed present North Dakota, ascended the Yellowstone River in Montana, and built a post at the mouth of the Big Horn, in the heart of the Crow country. Known as Fort Manuel or Fort Lisa, it was the first fur-trading post ever built on the Upper Missouri.

His trade with the Crows that winter was successful and the next summer he returned to St. Louis full of enthusiasm over this virgin territory, so rich in beaver. Excited by Lisa's reports, the traders of the town formed the Missouri Fur Company in the winter of 1808-1809 to exploit the new field. Next spring a great expedition of 350 men under Lisa, Andrew Henry, and Pierre Menard went up the river. Establishing a post above the mouth of the Knife River, in the Mandan country not far from Stanton, North Dakota, they went on to Fort Lisa on the Big Horn. Presently the Spaniard turned back down the river to the Mandans, and then to St. Louis, while Henry and Menard pressed on to the Three Forks, the source of the Missouri high in the Rockies. At first successful, their party soon met disaster from the hostility of the Blackfeet who fell upon its trappers spread out tending their traps along the beaver streams. In 1811 after suffering great hardships the remnants of the party came out of the mountains and the Company gave up its attempt to trade beyond the Mandans.

With its repeated reorganizations Lisa came to a more and more prominent place in the Company, and his principal post, established in 1812 and also called Fort Lisa, was located near the present city of Omaha, Nebraska, though he sent small outfits to trade farther up the river. In the years that followed he employed from one to two hundred men, and sent rich cargoes of furs down the river, one especially good return being worth \$35,000. His energy in the pursuit of trade was amazing. He himself once explained the reasons for his phenomenal success in these words:

"First, I put into my operations great activity; I go a great distance, while some are considering whether they will start today or tomorrow. I impose upon myself great privations: ten months in a year I am buried in the forest, at a vast distance from my own house. I appear as the benefactor, and not as the pillager, of the Indians. I carried among them the seed of the large pompon, from which I have seen in their possession the fruit weighing 160 pounds. Also the large bean, the potato, the turnip; and these vegetables now make a comfortable part of their subsistence, and this year I have promised to carry the plough. Besides, my blacksmiths work incessantly for them charging nothing. I lend them traps, only demanding preference in their trade. My establishments are the refuge of the weak and of the old men no longer able to follow their lodges; and by these means I have acquired the confidence and friendship of these nations, and the consequent choice of their trade."²

²Chittenden, Fur Trade, III, 901

Such was Lisa's success that it aroused the bitter jealousy of his competitors, and much of his life was lived in a turmoil of trouble with his rivals. The Spaniard's energy was well displayed by the great distances that he traveled on the Missouri, making some twelve or thirteen trips up that most difficult river from 1807 to 1820, a distance of about 26,000 miles under arduous conditions.

Lisa was married three times. Of his first wife little is known. Tradition holds that she was held a prisoner by the Indians until ransomed by William Henry Harrison, and then Lisa, pitying her condition, married her. She died in 1817, having borne three children, all of whom died while still young. In 1814, while she was still living, Lisa married an Indian girl, Mitain, a beautiful daughter of one of the principal families of the Omaha nation. On Lisa's part this was a business undertaking to ingratiate himself with the tribe, a very common practice with traders, but the girl, bearing him two children, fell deeply in love with the Spaniard, and suffered much anguish when Lisa took the first child to St. Louis to be raised and then in 1819 brought his third wife up the river to spend the winter at Fort Lisa. This was a widow, Mary Keeney Hempstead, of a prominent St. Louis family. Lisa loved her dearly but since his French and English were very bad, and Mary didn't speak French or Spanish, his native tongue, they sometimes had difficulty in understanding each other, much to the mirth of the family.

During the War of 1812 Lisa was appointed sub-agent for all the tribes on the Missouri above the mouth of the Kansas River, and used his great influence to keep them friendly to the United States. It was a remarkable and valuable service to the nation for which he received the salary of \$548.00, a sum which he estimated would not pay for the tobacco which he annually gave to the Indians.

The most thrilling incident in Lisa's career was his race with William Price Hunt who was leading the Astor expedition to Oregon. It was a grudge race, for Lisa felt that these rivals would ruin the trade of the Missouri Fur Company, while Hunt apparently believed that his safety from the Indians depended upon keeping ahead of the Spaniard. The Hunt party with its keelboats, had a nineteen-day start, but the Lisa brigade, toiling in the wet and cold with almost superhuman determination, caught him at the mouth of the Niobrara River in Nebraska. Ironically, the parties then fraternized and Lisa helped Hunt secure horses from the Indians with which to cross the plains. Lisa's victory, however, was another proof of his extraordinary abilities as a leader of men.

In 1820 the trader returned to St. Louis, fell ill, and quickly died a few weeks before his forty-eighth birthday. He had escaped a thousand dangers in the wilderness to die at home in bed of an unnamed malady. Tactful, skilled in dealing with the Indians, energetic, an inspiring leader and tireless traveler, he was the greatest fur trader who ever operated upon the wide Missouri. Let him stand then, as a representative of those hardy and daring pathfinders who opened the way for the settlement of the West.

JOHN JACOB ASTOR, CAPITALIST

I suppose all of us have seen advertisements of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, but few are aware that there was once a connection between the John Jacob Astor, whose name and birthplace it commemorates, and North Dakota. Yet Astor, the wealthiest American of his day was the founder of the American Fur Company which for many years held a practical monopoly on the trade of the Upper Missouri River. Thus he played, though he never set foot in our state, a significant role in the early history of North and South Dakota. Though we can hardly call him a hero, the story of his life is full of interest and color. Further, the fur trade was a great force in the opening of this western country, shaping relations with the Indians, increasing geographical knowledge, and paving the way for settlement.

John Jacob Astor was born July 17, 1763, in Waldorf, a village on the edge of the Black Forest, near the University town of Heidelberg.¹ His father was a "jovial, good-for-nothing butcher, . . . more at home in the beer-house than at his own fireside," and while the mother was industrious, saving, and capable, the family was often in want. The boy, a blond peasant, was kindly and affectionate. He grew barrel-chested and heavy-limbed, with his mind keen and inquisitive. None of the children liked the father, and when the mother died, the unhappy stripling of fourteen, reading the crude, ungrammatical letters of his older brother, the fat, healthy Heinrich now a butcher in New York, decided to try his fortune in free, democratic America.

Finally at seventeen, able to read, write and cipher, he left home on foot, with two dollars in his pocket, and stopping under a tree a little way from the village to ponder the future, resolved to be industrious, honest, and not to gamble. He found work on a lumber raft floating down the Rhine, and then with the money earned took passage from Amsterdam to London. Here another brother, George, found him employment in a musical instrument house. He now had two purposes: to learn to speak English, and to save money enough for a passage to America. In four years he had \$75 and the price of a suit of good clothes. Hearing the news of peace in the fall of 1783, he embarked for America in November with \$25, seven flutes, and a passage paper for a berth in steerage with sailor's fare of salt beef and biscuit.

On board were some officers of the Hudson's Bay Company and also a German youth who had traded with the Indians. From these companions young Astor learned the details of the fur trade, and soon after his arrival in New York, welcomed heartily there by butcher Heinrich, he found employment as clerk for a Quaker fur merchant. A year later he married Sarah Todd who brought him a dowry of \$300, a good business head, and an unusual talent for judging furs. Shortly they had a shop of their own, selling musical instruments and dealing in furs. Real partners, Sarah and John

¹The best sources on Astor are: Arthur D. Howden Smith, John Jacob Astor, Landlord of New York (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1929); Kenneth W. Porter, John Jacob Astor, Business Man (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931); Hiram M. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West (N.Y., Francis P. Harper, 1902); William J. Ghent, "John Jacob Astor," Dictionary of American Biography, I, 397-99. This invaluable work was published by Scribner's and sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and the New York Times.

Jacob, they worked hard in these early years, the wife tending the shop while the husband was away buying furs from farmers and Indians. With tireless energy Astor pushed his business, sailing up the Hudson on a bluff-bowed sloop to trade with the Iroquois of the Mohawk valley.

Here with a sixty-pound pack on his back and a rifle over his shoulder, he would tramp twenty miles a day in the wilderness. Here Arthur D. Howden Smith in his lively biography of Astor describes his tactics. "He was," wrote Smith, "extraordinarily successful. With typical German thoroughness, he was at pains to learn all he could of the Indian dialects, their customs, whimsies, and peculiarities. He discovered that they were fond of music, and more than once with the trills of his flute soothed a sour-visaged Seneca or Mohawk, who thought of lifting a blonde scalp in revenge for some clan-brother lost at Criskany or on the Sacandaga. The news of his coming presently filtered through the forest aisles in advance of him. A merry, yellow-haired white man, who spoke as if he were munching a mouthful of husked corn and made pleasant noises on a stick. He paid fair prices for furs, but he knew a mangy skin when he saw one."

He had learned how to care for pelts, to judge their quality. He knew the technic of trading with the Indians who must always be made to believe that they had the best of a deal. He learned the geography of the business, where the best pelts came from. He was a capable forest runner, could make his way by the sun and stars, tell north by the moss on tree trunks, knew how to throw up a lean-to and build a fire in the rain, how to stalk deer or wild turkey, how to repair a slit in the birchen walls of his frail craft with a bit of bark and a handful of spruce-gum.

Working, scrimping, saving, ever planning new ventures, Sarah and John Jacob worked their way up in the world together. By 1800 he was the leading factor in the fur trade, reputed to be worth \$200,000. Already while riding out for recreation, he was figuring what lands to buy on the outskirts of New York and putting his spare funds into the real estate that with the growth of the city was to make him the landlord of New York and the richest man in America. Now he embarked on the trade with the Orient, sending out furs, bringing back tea. On his first venture there his profits were \$55,000. Soon he owned a fleet of ships trading with Canton, the profits rolling in. No one rivalled his success in this trade. He had the Midas-touch; during the War of 1812 he bought government bonds at 80, paying for them with bank notes worth perhaps half of their face value. Soon after the conflict the bonds were at 120.

As he grew richer, he grew less attractive, though he was always good to his family, generous to his children, devoted to Sarah, whom he sometimes paid \$500 an hour to judge furs. He was fond of aristocratic trappings, with little use for the democracy that had given him his opportunity. He had, Smith tells us, no sense of social obligation, he never worked for the community, always for John Jacob Astor. He was "bigoted, self-assured, vain -- in a peculiarly bland, childish fashion -- opinionated, narrow-minded and entirely selfish, where his family was not concerned." An autocrat, he would squeeze the last penny out of anyone dealing with him. Before his death he was a legend, "The Old Skinflint," or "Miser Astor." While in a conventional way a good citizen, his biographer Smith concludes that he was "never, in the finer sense, a gentleman!"

Though his business interests multiplied, he continued to trade in furs, forming the American Fur Company in 1808 as an instrument for his activities. Astor himself held all the stock of its \$1,000,000 capitalization. Not at once entering the trade of Far West because of the hostility of the St. Louis traders, he slowly formed a project for the Pacific coast, and in 1811 his men founded Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. The Overlanders, the Astor party that crossed the Plains and Rockies to aid in this project, suffered terrible hardships, while the Tonquin, the ship that had rounded the Horn to reach the Columbia, was soon lost with all its crew in an Indian massacre and explosion. With the advent of the War of 1812, Astor's representative, a Canadian and former employee of the British Northwest Company, sold out the property and furs at Astoria to his former employer at a fraction of their real value. In spite of this failure, in a blind, stumbling way Astor had helped make Oregon American soil. He lost \$800,000 on this project, but recouped after the war when he persuaded Congress to exclude aliens from the fur trade in the United States and then bought up for bargain prices British posts in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and about the Great Lakes.

Here the principal headquarters of the American Fur Company were at Mackinac, on the strait between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and at Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River in southwestern Wisconsin. A serious problem was the control of the traffic in liquor with the Indians. Whisky, as Kenneth Porter wrote, turned the Indian "into a homicidal maniac, ready to scalp his best friend or closest relative. Moreover, it was not long until the Indian who had for a few times partaken of the trader's liquor had become, when not under the direct influence of the intoxicant, a pitiful sot, so enslaved to the habit as to be willing to trade his gun or his last blanket for a swallow of alcohol. Alcohol in its various forms left in its wake intertribal wars, hostility between the natives and the border settlements, disease, poverty, starvation, and death." There was among the Indians no such thing as a "moderate drinker." Truly, it was as the Superintendent of the Indian Bureau wrote in 1826: "The trader with the whisky . . . is certain of getting most furs."²

Although for a short time the American Fur Company opposed the use of liquor in the Indian trade, this attitude soon changed and it was busy evading the government regulations and attempting to intimidate overzealous Indian agents who checked them, sometimes arrogantly threatening the officials with dismissal, for it was well-known that Astor had great influence at Washington. The Company was always able to escape the full consequences of its illegal activity. One justification for the use of liquor claimed that it was necessary to meet the competition of British traders near the international boundary. Another subterfuge pretended that it was for the use of the engagés, the Company's hard-working employees. On whatever pretext, the American Fur Company took simply enormous quantities of liquor into the Indian country. For one stretch of years 5,000 gallons annually was the smallest amount ever delivered to the post at Mackinac.

² Porter, John Jacob Astor, II, 796.

Chief Pokagon, who had been familiar with the fur trade there, described how Astor's men used whisky:

"'Let me tell you,' he said, 'some things I have seen at some of our trading posts; even Mackinaw, where Astor got rich and we very poor. The most profitable trade and the most ruinous trade Mackinaw ever had was in whisky.' Then he gave the formula . . . used on Mackinaw Island 1817-18, for making whisky for the Indians. Actual cost not to exceed five cents a gallon and retailed to the Indians for fifty cents a bottle, of which thousands of bottles were sold every year Take two gallons of common whisky or unrectified spirits (high wines), add to thirty gallons of water and to this add red pepper enough to make it fiery and tobacco enough to make it intoxicating, and you have a decoction that will cause the Indian to give everything he possesses in to the hands of the white man."³

After a number of years about the Great Lakes, the American Fur Company reached out for the trade of Missouri valley, establishing its Western Department at St. Louis in the spring of 1822. Soon Company posts stretched up the Big Muddy, from Council Bluffs, near the mouth of the Platte, to the vicinity of present-day Pierre, South Dakota. In these first years on the Missouri it met a competition from the Columbia Fur Company that it could not crush, but finally negotiations brought about a union of the two companies in 1827, the Columbia group becoming the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company. It then took over the entire trade above the mouth of the Big Sioux River.

Now the leading spirit on the Upper Missouri was Kenneth McKenzie, a former partner of the Columbia group and a Canadian long experienced in the trade. Bold and determined, he pushed operations farther up the Big Muddy than they had yet reached, establishing Fort Union near the mouth of the Yellowstone in 1828, and then opening up, for the very first time by Americans, trade with the hostile Blackfeet, building Fort McKenzie for this purpose in 1832 about six miles above the Marias River in central Montana. Later this post, moved a little farther up the river, became the famous Fort Benton, named in honor of the Missouri Senator who was the spokesman for the Company at Washington. Reaching into the heart of the Crow country, McKenzie the same year built Fort Cass on the Yellowstone at the mouth of the Big Horn. Another important Company post was Fort Pierre, across the river from the present capital of South Dakota. It was named after Pierre Chouteau, Jr., who directed the operations of the firm from St. Louis.

The American Fur Company, perhaps the first trust in the United States, prospered here as elsewhere.

With Astor's wealth behind it, it could follow Chouteau's crisp instructions to crush all opposition at whatever cost. At one time McKenzie, ruling like a baron at Fort Union, paid four times the usual price for beaver pelts in order to break a competitor. Determined always to have liquor to win over the Indians, the Company smuggled large quantities up the river on its steamboats. But fearful that this resource might

³Ibid., II, 302-03.

fail, McKenzie brought a still up to Fort Union in 1833 and began distilling whisky there from corn. Though this violation of the law was soon reported by rival traders and McKenzie had to stop his distillery, the Company was not punished. Hated alike by its own employees and its competitors, its universal reputation was that it would resort to any means, fair or foul, to monopolize the trade of the Missouri.

At last after fifty years in the business, Astor sold out his interest in the Company in 1834. Now an old man of 71, stout, squarely built, five feet nine inches tall, he still spoke with a German accent. When he died in 1848 he was by far the richest man in America, with a fortune estimated at \$20,000,000.. One of the ablest, boldest, and most successful operators that ever lived, he was also ruthless, grasping, and selfish. To the end the amassing of wealth was his ruling passion. Perhaps he deserves our pity as much as our scorn. Certainly we cannot consider him a real Hero of Dakota.

JOSEPH LA BARGE, STEAMBOAT CAPTAIN

Today I want to talk to you about the Missouri River and Joseph La Barge. For over a hundred years after white men began to travel on the Big Muddy, it was the great highway for the country through which it ran. The history of the Northwest was the history of the river until the railroads began to reach into the region in the late eighteen-sixties. Since Captain La Barge was identified with the river for over fifty years, the story of his life is the story of steam navigation on the Missouri. Thus Hiram M. Chittenden, one of the great historians of the West, entitled the book from which I am drawing today's talk: History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River, Life and Adventures of Joseph La Barge, Pioneer Navigator and Indian Trader, For Fifty Years Identified with the Commerce of the Missouri Valley. Published in 1903 in two volumes by Francis P. Harper, it is a most interesting and valuable contribution to the history of the Missouri country. You would also enjoy Stanley Vestal's volume, The Missouri, published in 1945 by Farrar and Rinehart. It captures the color and adventure of the river with rare skill.

Joseph La Barge was born in St. Louis on October 1, 1815, of French and Spanish stock. His father, a native of Quebec, arrived in the Mississippi River town in 1808 just as he became of age, while his mother, daughter of a French girl and a Spanish soldier, ^{was} born in St. Louis. Little Joseph was early fascinated by steamboats, for his father would take him down to the river to watch them, and soon the child was drawing boats and whittling models of them. As he grew a little older he became a leader among the other boys. "He could jump higher, run faster, and swim farther than any other lad in town." At ten he took part in welcoming the great LaFayette to St. Louis. The Revolutionary hero shook hands with the boys and tradition holds that young La Barge caught a ride on the back of the great man's carriage. Indeed, he was ever full of high spirits and energy. While his schooling was limited, he learned to speak English without a trace of accent, though he long used French while at home. His parents wishing him to become a priest, sent him off at twelve to St. Mary's College some fifty miles down the river, but after three years here he got into trouble and was expelled.

Soon the youth was attracted by the fur trade with its stories of high adventure that came drifting back to St. Louis, the principal outfitting point for the western trade. In 1831 the steamer Yellowstone, built for the American Fur Company, made its pioneering trip up the Missouri, reaching Fort Tecumseh, opposite present Pierre, South Dakota. It was the beginning of steam navigation on the upper river. After its return young La Barge worked aboard it for the winter of 1831-32 in the sugar trade of Bayou la Fourche, down on the delta of Old Louisiana, being very useful as an interpreter. Then, nearly seventeen, he signed a three-year contract with the American Fur Company for \$700 for the whole term.

Assigned to Cabanné's post at Council Bluffs, a few miles above modern Omaha, he was sent out for the winter of 1832-33 to trade with the Pawnees on the Loup Fork of the Platte. Here he lived an interesting life in the lodge of Chief Big Axe, practically learning the Pawnee tongue in that one winter, much to the astonishment of both whites and Indians. He was a promising lad, strong, courageous, and alert. With the spring came high water and Joseph helped load the furs on bullboats and floated down to the mouth of the Platte. Soon he went down the river with a fleet of mackinaw boats, carrying the returns of the season to St. Louis.

In the winter of 1833-34 Joshua Pilcher, his bourgeois, trusted him with the important winter express to Fort Pierre (formerly Fort Techumseh). Though the country was new to him, he set out in the northern winter, taking a few pounds of hard bread and some corn, but subsisting mostly on game. In camp one night he built a good fire in the snow and was roasting a prairie chicken when he looked up to see four gray wolves a little way from him. Nearly paralyzed by the sight, he got his gun and pistols ready for action, but they, after watching him a few minutes, slipped away. He got through to Fort Pierre and after a short rest returned to Cabanné, to Pilcher's delight. Soon the bourgeois wrote: "Joseph La Barge, wintered with me last winter, and has been faithful, active, and enterprising. . . La Barge writes a tolerably good hand, and if you have any place for him above, I can recommend him as a modest and good young man who has done his duty here (as an engagé) very faithfully."

The young trader was an expert swimmer. Sometimes in those early days he would leap from a boat "when he saw an elk or deer crossing the river, outswim and catch it, hold on to it until its feet touch the bottom, and then kill it as it was ascending the bank." In the spring of 1835 La Barge's contract with the American Fur Company ended, and after working a year with a trader at St. Joseph, he spent the next four on the lower river as a sort of practical apprenticeship in steamboating, as a clerk, pilot, and master on different boats. By 1840 Captain La Barge had a reputation as pilot that assured him continuous employment on the river.

The wild, wide Missouri was the highway to a vast expanse of the northern plains and mountains. Stretching nearly 3000 miles from its source in the Rockies to its union with the Mississippi, its muddy current flows much of the distance through alluvial bottoms built up fifty to a hundred feet above bed rock with earth from the highlands. Full of freshly formed islands and innumerable sandbars, its unstable channel and shifting bed are never in the same place two years in succession. Its many bends makes the river longer, forming, as Chittenden happily puts it, "a great spiral staircase leading from the ocean to the mountains." Thus a steamboat at Fort Benton in central Montana rested 2565 feet above sea level, though the ascent has been gentle, without falls or rapids to overcome. Its swift current carries yearly over half a billion tons of earth from the mountains to the Mississippi, more than the annual tonnage of American railways in the nineteen-thirties.

In the spring when the ice breaks and begins to run, the river gives a tremendous exhibition of its power. Sometimes the blocks

of ice pile up, forming gorges that may even force the river into a new channel before they break with much damage to property. The crushing of the ice cakes against each other makes a continuous roar that can be heard a long distance from the river.

The name of the river came from the Missouri Indians who once lived along its lower course; Missouri means "dwelling near the mouth of the river." The Sioux called it "Mini Sose" (pronounced Min-ny So' say), meaning "roiled water" or muddy. Discovered by Marquette and Joliet in 1673 as they descended the Mississippi, the mighty volume of muddy water entering from the west, carrying trees, stumps, and all sorts of drift, filled them with awe. Soon the French traders were pushing up the river and it is believed that when St. Louis was founded in 1764, the river was well known for a thousand miles above its mouth. In 1804 when Lewis and Clark went up the river they found that white men had preceded them almost to the mouth of the Yellowstone, its principal tributary. This is near the present North Dakota-Montana line.

Many types of craft navigated the Big Muddy. Dugout canoes from cottonwood or walnut which might reach thirty feet in length, though fifteen to twenty was more common. Flatbottomed mackinaws sometimes fifty feet long with a twelve foot beam were used only for downstream navigation. The bullboats of the traders, to be distinguished from the little tubs of the Indian squaws, were constructed of a framework of stout willow poles, thirty feet from end to end and twelve wide, covered with the skins of buffalo bulls. Drawing only four to eight inches of water, these were used generally by traders in bringing furs down the Loup Fork of the Platte to the Missouri, and also on the Niobrara, the Cheyenne, and other tributaries. Then there was the keelboat, used to take merchandise up the river for the fur trade, and on all important military and exploring expeditions. Sixty to seventy feet long and staunchly built, it was polled or towed up the river by men on shore.

Finally, the powerful steamboat, its handsome form high above the water with its lofty chimneys pouring smoke, conquered the river. The first Yellowstone, built specially for the upper river in 1830-31, was a small boat only 130 feet in length, with a 6-foot hold, sidewheels, and a capacity of 75 tons. More modern steamboats, propelled by a stern wheel, might be 220 feet from bow to stern, 35 feet wide, and carry 500 tons, but most of the boats on the Upper Missouri were much smaller than this. They drew only 3 or 4 feet of water. The quarters of the crew and steerage passengers were on the boiler deck, the officers' cabins occupied the hurricane deck, called the texas, while the pilot house rose above this. On the Big Muddy steamboats usually carried two small cannons to frighten the Indians if they became too defiant.

Though the first steamboat entered the Missouri in 1819, it was not very successful. Then in 1831 the American Fur Company sent the Yellowstone up to Fort Tecumseh, and the next year to Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone. Thereafter every spring with high water the Company sent one or two boats up the river with trade goods

and then quickly, before the river subsided, brought down the bales of fur from its posts. As the years passed the vessels pushed farther and farther upstream. In 1860 a steamboat touched Fort Benton in central Montana, and six years later one came within a few miles of Great Falls, the most distant point ever reached on the river.

At first the steamboats carried largely goods for the Indian trade and Indian annuities, then with the Mexican War and the gold rush to California, they were loaded with supplies for the military and with miners. The discovery of gold in Montana in 1864 at Last Chance Gulch (later Helena) greatly stimulated the business, and in 1866-67 there were 70 steamboat arrivals at Fort Benton, the vessels carrying passengers, freight, and quartz mills up the river and gold dust down. Profits were enormous, and Captain La Barge made \$40,000 on one trip.

Let us go along on a typical voyage up the Missouri in the eighteen-thirties or forties. At St. Louis a cargo of assorted goods would be put aboard, articles for the Indians, the equipment of hunting and trapping parties, government annuities for various tribes, stores for Indian agencies and military posts. In addition to the crew of thirty or forty men the vessel would carry recruits for the trading companies, hunters, trappers, and voyageurs. There might be a company of soldiers, and often passengers distinguished for wealth or scientific attainments, making the trip for pleasure or research. In the early days the departure was the occasion for much carousing and revelry, and because of this the men never received their allowance of clothing and blankets until they were actually on board. "As the boat swung into the stream a running salute of musketry was kept up by the mountaineers and others until it was out of hearing".

Soon the question of physical supremacy was fought out by the members of the crew. One bourgeois always forced an early decision to end all blustering and quarreling, and the champion received a red belt in token of his victory. On board the engagés, as the Company's employees were called, lived on a plain fare of pork, lyed corn, and navy beans, but when the steamboat reached the Indian country, game was secured for meat. Hunters would leave the boat at midnight, scour the country ahead, and hang up what they took in a conspicuous spot where it was picked up when the steamboat came along.

Often the passengers amused themselves by shooting at ducks and geese on the river, and when there was no danger from the Indians, they might land at the beginning of a series of bends and amble overland, rejoining the boat when it came along. If they were on an easy stretch of water, the passengers would perhaps gather at the pilot house and listen to the pilot spin yarns of his adventurous experiences.

The Missouri River pilot was the most skillful of his profession. He has to have coolness and judgment in time of danger, nerve to act promptly and boldly. The Missouri was swift and full of snags and sawyers. When the wind ruffled the river it was very

difficult to read the shifting channel from the surface of the water.

Ever-present danger kept the signal bell tinkling messages to the engineer. Pilots were men of high standing and character and Captain La Barge was one of the best. He had an amazing knowledge of the river. His biographer Chittenden writes: "There was not a bend or rapids, a bed of snags, or other feature in all its twenty-six hundred miles that was not as familiar to him as the rooms of his own house." Ordinarily the steamboats ran only during daylight, but even then wind would often cause a boat to lie at the bank for several hours. When the discovery of gold in Montana increased river traffic so greatly, pilots were paid as much as \$1200 a month while the master of the vessel received only \$200.

La Barge made a fortune in the business one way and another, often owning his vessels, but he stayed on too long and lost his wealth when the railway finally beat out the river. An old man of sixty-three he was master on the last through voyage from St. Louis to the head of navigation at Fort Benton in 1878. Thus he had seen it all, the whole era of commercial steamboating on the Upper Missouri.

Of distinguished appearance, he was a well-built man, five feet ten in height, erect and muscular, with an iron constitution. The "brown-faced and black-eyed pilot" was much admired by those who knew him on the river, for he had a reputation for dependability and integrity. While a slaveowner in a small way, he was loyal to the Union when the Civil War came. "Though he had rivals to fame in his brother John and in Grant Marsh, Joseph La Barge was the most widely known of the Missouri River boatmen. His manners were sociable, his voice pleasant, and he talked entertainingly." ¹

Hiram M. Chittenden, doing research in St. Louis for his history of the fur trade, met the venerable river pilot in 1896. The old man, remarkable keen and alert, recounted for Chittenden his rich memories of life on the Big Muddy. Thus before he died in 1899 at the age of 83, he had not only lived the history of the steam navigation on the Missouri, but had helped to write it as well. Let us then remember Joseph La Barge, Steamboat Captain, this American of French and Spanish stock who, courageous and good, played a man's part in North Dakota's heroic past.

¹W. J. Ghent, "Joseph La Barge," Dictionary of American Biography, X, 517-18.

FATHER PIERRE-JEAN DE SMET, MISSIONARY

The first figures that pushed beyond the Mississippi were the hardy men who traded for furs with the Indians. These traders were the true pathfinders of the region; truly, "the map of the West was drawn on a beaver skin." The fur buyers were quickly followed by others, by miners and prospectors that searched the mountains for gold, by Indian agents charged with the protection of the natives, by soldiers to guard the border. There came mountain men, official explorers, boatmen, freighters, and many another resolute type that formed the vanguard of the frontier. Not the least of these were the missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, that brought the light of Christianity to those that sat in darkness on the western plains and mountains. The most famous of these was Father Pierre-Jean De Smet. Setting up missions in the Columbia Valley, traveling tirelessly up and down the Missouri, he won such a reputation among the Indians for good faith and honesty that his services were frequently sought by the government when it wished to bring peace to the Great Plains.

Born at Termonde, Belgium, on January 30, 1801, Pierre-Jean De Smet was educated at the seminary of Malines where he excelled in both studies and sports.¹ So strong was he that his youthful friends called him "Samson." Short, stockily built, his appearance was handsome and attractive, his look benign, his blue eyes expressing both his sound intelligence and his religious feeling. In July, 1821, the young man came to America with a number of his school fellows and entered the novitiate of the Jesuit order established a few years earlier at Whitemarsh, near Baltimore.

Two years later he was one of the small party that set out on a picturesque journey to establish a second novitiate of the order on a tract of land at Florissant, some fifteen miles north of St. Louis. Let me quote the description of their journey in Everett Dick's exciting book, The Story of the Frontier; "The Maryland party, consisting of seven Flemish novices, three lay brothers, and three negro families, left Baltimore with two wagons to carry the luggage and a light wagon in which the travelers were to ride when they were too tired to walk They cooked their own food and camped by the wayside at vacant cabins or farm homes. After eighteen days they reached Wheeling, West Virginia. Since their resources were too limited to purchase a boat, two scows were acquired and lashed together forming a makeshift boat. At the mouth of the Ohio the goods were loaded on a steamer, and the party walked the two hundred miles across Illinois to St. Louis, through marshes, often up to their waists in water, and

¹See Joseph Schafer, "Pierre-Jean De Smet," Dictionary of American Biography, V, 255-56, published by Scribner's and sponsored by the New York Times and the American Council of Learned Societies. Hiram M. Chittenden and Alfred T. Richardson, Life, Letters, and Travels of Pierre-Jean De Smet, 1801-1873 (Frances P. Harper, N. Y., 1905, 4 vols.).

seldom finding shelter in an inn or farm-house."²

Arriving at Florissant where the Sisters of the Sacred Heart already were established, the novices were soon busy felling the trees necessary to build their new quarters. In this work De Smet's great strength won him prestige, for he bore more than his share in cutting the huge timbers and carrying them to the location. Now he weighed over two hundred pounds and his face beamed with good humor and benevolence. Frank, attractive, and buoyant, he was ordained in 1827, becoming Father De Smet.

At Florissant the Society of Jesus soon opened a school for Indians, and then in the city established St. Louis University in 1829 for white scholars. Father De Smet was absent in Europe from 1833 to 1837, securing scientific instruments for the University, and recruits for the Jesuit community. Upon his return he was sent up the Missouri to establish a mission at Council Bluffs among the Potawatomies, and then in 1839 he made a trip up the Big Muddy to Vermillion River to make peace between the Potawatomies and the Sioux. It was the beginning of his work as a missionary to the Indians, and as a mediator between warring forces in the West.

Soon a deputation of Flatheads stopped at Council Bluffs on their way to St. Louis to ask that a black-robe be sent to their tribe. As a result of their visit Father De Smet set out in March, 1840, for the Oregon country. At the end of seven years' labor and with the aid of other hands, the Columbia valley was dotted with Catholic missions. The good Father had traveled over 50,000 miles by sailing vessel, canoe, dogsled, and on foot, once sailing from Europe around Cape Horn to the mouth of the Columbia. Now known by virtually all the Indians of the Northwest, he was personally a power among them. He was the one white man in whom they had complete faith, and the government was beginning to look to him for assistance.

He once wrote of his experiences on the western frontier: "I have been for years a wanderer in the desert. I was three years without receiving a letter from any quarter. I was two years in the mountains, without tasting bread, salt, coffee, tea, or sugar. I was for years without a roof, without a bed. I have been six months without a shirt on my back, and often I have passed whole days and nights without a morsel of anything to eat."

After 1846 Father De Smet did not live in the mountains, for his work was largely in St. Louis as business manager of the order. He also traveled widely in the East and in Europe to raise funds and win new members for its work. Yet he often went up the Missouri to visit the Indians. For example, in 1859 he journeyed

²Dick's volume was originally published under the title Vanguards of the Frontier by D. Appleton-Century Company. Recently it was reprinted by the Tudor Publishing Company.

from Fort Benton, in central Montana, to Council Bluffs, near present Omaha, Nebraska, in a frail skiff on the turbulent Missouri, going hundreds of miles through wild country with but one companion. On this trip through present North and South Dakota he stopped again and again for a day or two to minister to the different tribes, baptizing in the course of the journey some 900 Indian children. Showing him the greatest respect and affection, the red men always listened to him with close attention.

He has left us an interesting description of this journey: "During this long trip on the river we passed the nights in the open air, or under a little tent, often on sandbars to avoid the troublesome mosquitoes, or on the skirts of a plain, or an untrodden forest. We often heard the howlings of the wolves, and the grunting of the grizzly bear disturbed our sleep, but without alarming us The rivers furnished us excellent fish, waterfowl, ducks, geese, and swans; the forest and plains gave us fruits and roots. We never wanted for game; we found everywhere either immense herds of buffalo, of deer, antelope, mountain sheep and bighorn, or pheasants, wild turkeys and partridges."

In 1863 he planned to establish a mission among the Sioux, but the Minnesota massacre followed by the Sibley and Sully campaigns in Dakota Territory interfered, and he made a trip to Fort Benton instead. Delayed at the mouth of the Milk River by low water, he set up a chapel in a large tent provided by General Harney and conducted religious services as he often did on board steamboats while traveling. One day at Milk River a band of some 600 Sioux threatened to attack the camp, but Father De Smet went out courageously to meet them. The warriors, recognizing him, greeted him with the utmost friendliness, and after some presents and an interview, withdrew.

This was a striking illustration of the universal esteem in which "Black-robe", as the Indians called him, was held by all who knew him. Whenever he went up the Big Muddy by steamboat, the news ran ahead of him, and wherever the vessel stopped to cut or take on wood, the people came in to see the good priest. Then he would be busy, solemnizing marriages, baptizing, and hearing confessions. Freeing his heart and conduct of sin, looking with charity on those who did him wrong, he was a good man, and his goodness shone in his countenance. As one who knew him said: "His face was a benediction," and another who had traveled far with him characterized Father De Smet as "genial, of fine presence, and one of the saintliest men I have ever known, and I cannot wonder that the Indians were made to believe him divinely protected. He was a man of great kindness and great affability under all circumstances; nothing seemed to disturb his temper."

These qualities gave him great influence with the Indians. Convinced of his goodwill, they trusted him above any other white man. Thus from the Fort Laramie Council in 1851 to the pacification of the Sioux in 1868, he was repeatedly called on by the government to help in bringing about peace with the Indians. This last incident was his greatest achievement. His sympathies were on the side of the red men. "I am firmly convinced," he declared, "that if the just claims of the Indians are attended to; if their

annuities are paid them at the proper time and place; if the agents and other employees of the Government treat them with honesty and justice; if they are supplied with the necessary tools for carpentry and agriculture--- the tribes of the Upper Missouri will maintain peace with the white" After a trip up the river in 1867 in which he talked with bands all along its course in the interest of peace, he came up to Fort Rice, about 20 miles south of Bismarck, in May, 1868, and prepared to go out to find the hostile Sioux under Sitting Bull. Indians and whites alike thought his plan full of danger and freely predicted a tragic ending to it.

Nevertheless, accompanied by some 80 peaceful Sioux, he set out from Fort Rice on a march of 300 miles through rough country, toward the mouth of the Powder River. Shortly scouts were sent ahead with presents of tobacco. If they were taken, the hostiles would receive Father De Smet. In a few days the scouts returned with 16 warriors, shouting and singing with gladness. After smoking the pipe with them, the priest learned that his tobacco had been accepted; "Black-robe" could enter the Sioux camp. That night was spent in feasting and smoking with the newcomers. The next day they went on toward the hostile village .

Let Father De Smet describe in his own words his meeting with the fighting Sioux! "Some four miles off in the Powder river bottoms we saw a strong force of horsemen composed of 400 to 500 warriors coming to meet me. I at once had my standard of peace hoisted, with the holy name of Jesus on one side and on the other the image of the Virgin Mary, surrounded with gilt stars Immediately afterward, the four chiefs came to us at full speed and seemed, as it were, to flit around the banner. They considered it, and upon perceiving its meaning and high importance, they came up and shook my hand and made signals to all their warriors to advance. They then formed into a single long line or phalanx; we did the same, and with the flag at our head we went to meet them. At the same time the air resounded with shouts and songs of joy on both sides. I was touched even to tears at the sight of the reception which the sons of the desert, still in paganism, had prepared for the Black-robe. It was the fairest spectacle in which I have ever had the happiness of taking part."

After this hearty welcome the good Father was taken to the encampment, and lay down to rest a little in a lodge prepared for him by Sitting Bull. At the council next day the Sioux decided to go in to Fort Laramie to confer with the commissioners of the United States. There a little later they signed a treaty of peace. No one else could have done what this beloved priest, now 67 and ailing, had accomplished by his tiring 600-mile journey.

In 1870 he visited the Grand River agency, in present South Dakota, to arrange for the establishment of a mission for the Sioux, but this was never carried out. The next year he made his last trip to Europe, and then died in St. Louis in 1873, shortly after his good friend Captain Joseph La Barge had named a steamboat after him.

In the course of his life he had traveled 180,000 miles, an amazing distance, crossing the ocean 19 times. Ever full of jest and merriment, he was naturally inclined to laughter. Sometimes the formalities of an Indian council so provoked his mirth that he had hard work to keep a sober face. He loved to tell jokes and had a keen relish for the awkward plight in which his varied experiences had placed him. Though he suffered as much as anyone, the distresses of seasickness always appealed to his funny side. His was a tender and affectionate nature. Passionately fond of his family in Belgium, he was always eager to receive letters from them. He had much common-sense and readily won the respect and confidence of those that he met. He loved the beauties of nature and took an active interest in his surroundings. Well and powerfully built, Father De Smet possessed a charming dignity and suavity of manner; more than this, his religious life gave his bearing and appearance an irresistible appeal. It was plain that he had lived, as the Jesuit motto ran, "To the greater glory of God." Such was the character of "Black-robe", friend of Indian and white, priest to the western plains and mountains, Hero of Dakota.

MAXIMILIAN, PRINCE OF WIED

Our knowledge of the past owes much to the accounts of travelers. America was from the beginning an object of great interest to Europeans, and so it was only natural that visitors should write accounts of their observations for their contemporaries in the Old World. Along with such narratives go those of Americans who visited the West when it was little known. Not only did Lewis and Clark keep journals, but many other explorers have left records of their wanderings. A considerable number of these were republished as Early Western Travels, 1746-1846, a magnificent work in 32 volumes that appeared early in the present century under the editorship of Reuben Gold Thwaites, one of the great historians of the West.¹ For us in North Dakota the most important of these are the three volumes containing the Travels in the Interior of North America by Maximilian, Prince of Wied, for they contain an account by an able German scientist of his trip up the Missouri River, and his sojourn with the Mandans during the winter of 1833-1834. It is a very interesting and valuable record, and after telling you a little of Maximilian, I wish to describe his journey and something of the life of the Upper Missouri and of the Mandan Indians.

Born in September, 1782, in the quaint town of Neuwied, on the picturesque Rhine, he was the eighth child of the ruling prince of the little Rhenish sovereignty. Although he early showed a natural aptitude for study, he patriotically entered the Prussian army and fought against Napoleon. While in the service he was for a time a prisoner of war, but later rose to a major-general, and won the iron cross for gallantry at Chalons. As a boy his mother had encouraged his love for nature, and later his University training had strengthened his desire to be a natural scientist. Even on the battlefield he dreamed of finding new plants and animals in the wilderness, and before Napoleon had surrendered on the field of Waterloo, he was deep in the Brazil jungle. From the Prince's stay in Brazil, 1815-1817, came many learned books and a great natural history collection which established his reputation as a scholar.

Then in 1832 the distinguished naturalist sailed for the United States to fulfill a boyhood ambition to visit the Great West. With him was Charles Bodmer, a youthful Swiss artist, later to win fame, and his faithful servant, the huntsman Dreidoppel, who had accompanied him to Brazil. Landing at Boston, the party quickly went on to New York and then Philadelphia, but wandered leisurely westward through Pennsylvania, where the Prince collected natural history specimens and visited the thrifty German settlements. Then descending the Ohio, he passed an enjoyable winter at New Harmony, Indiana, with the companionship of other naturalists and an excellent library. In the spring at St. Louis Maximilian arranged to travel on the steamboat Yellowstone to the posts of the American Fur Company far up the Missouri.

Thus the Germans were aboard when on April 10, 1833, with guns firing a salute and friends waving farewell, the Yellowstone cast off for the Dakota country. The difficult voyage was full of interest for the Prince. Frequently the vessel ran aground on sandbars and had to be lightened to get off. Often they stopped to cut wood for its boilers. The ship's hunters brought in elk and other game for the table. Every night the craft was tied up to the bank, and even during the day it was often delayed by

¹Published by The Arthur H. Clark Company.

storms and high winds. Sometimes a rise in the river would bring swirling down its flood tree trunks and huge branches that made the staunch vessel tremble with many a rough shock. Then the men would fend off the drift with long poles. Even so the steamboat suffered much damage. At one point they were delayed five days by shallow water, finally the river rose, and they went on.

All the while the enthusiastic scientist was carefully observing the passing scene. Daily or more frequently he noted the temperature and jotted down the wind and the weather. Taking advantage of delays, he would go ashore for specimens of plant and animal life. He noticed the geological formations along the river banks, repeatedly remarking on the exposed strata of coal. In South Dakota he was delighted by the appearance of antelope, wolves, and buffalo, and then in North Dakota he saw grizzly bears as well.

Before this, however, they had reached Fort Pierre, opposite the present capital of South Dakota, where they were welcomed by a running fire of musketry and a joyous throng of some 100 persons, with no end of shaking hands and eager questions. Fort Pierre, an important post of the American Fur Company, was formed by a large quadrangle of high pickets about 108 by 114 paces. At the northeast and southwest corners stood blockhouses armed with cannon. Inside the walls there was a flag-pole, a residence for the commandant with large rooms, fire-places, and glass windows, store-houses, and quarters for the engagés and their families. The stores contained \$80,000 worth of trade goods as well as furs received in barter from the Indians. Nearby lay an enclosed garden, while the establishment possessed 150 horses and 35 cattle which supplied fresh milk and butter. Men of many Sioux bands, Brulé, Sans Arc, Oglala, and Hunkpapa, were scattered over the plain, and their leather tents made a little village, swarming with wolf-like dogs.

Soon the Yellowstone, loaded with 7000 buffalo skins and other peltry, sailed for St. Louis, and Maximilian with his baggage transferred to the Assiniboine, continued up the Big Muddy to Fort Clark. This post was eight miles below present Stanton, North Dakota. Lewis and Clark had wintered three-quarters of a mile upstream and across the river. Here too the arrival of the steamboat set off salutes by cannon and musket, while some 600 Indians, dressed in their finest, crowded the bank to welcome the passengers. Fort Clark was built on much the same plan as Fort Pierre, though much smaller for its stockade was but 44 by 49 paces. There were blockhouses, a strong gate, a flag-pole, a press to force the pelts into compact bundles, and a garden, but no cattle. When Maximilian and his companions visited a Crow camp nearby, it was only with difficulty they could beat off the horde of wolf-like dogs. The foreign visitors were here an object of interest to the Indians who continually stopped them, shook hands, and looked them over from all sides. One young warrior, fascinated by the compass suspended from Maximilian's neck, offered him a handsome horse for it, then his clothes and arms, and became very angry when the Prince refused to sell the instrument.

Soon the Assiniboine steamed up the Missouri to Fort Union, five miles beyond the mouth of the Yellowstone, arriving 75 days out of St. Louis. This was the most important post of the American Fur Company on the Upper Missouri. Its quadrangle measured 80 paces square, with walls 16 feet high. Within were the spacious house of the popular bourgeois, Kenneth McKenzie, and residences for the engagés, clerks, and interpreters. Here too stood the stores for trade goods and peltries, the workshops of smiths and

carpenters, and nearby were found stables for horses and cattle. Beneath the flagstaff rested a cannon, ^{pointing} toward the main gate. The 50 to 60 horses of the fort were grazed under armed guard, and driven within the walls at night. Besides this stock, there were some mules and a few cattle, swine, and fowls. Though McKenzie was well-liked by the red men, only a few of them were allowed in the fort at one time.

After a short stay at Union, Maximilian went up by keelboat to Fort McKenzie, in central Montana, watched from its ramparts a battle between Assiniboine and Blackfeet, and then returned to Fort Clark to pass the winter observing the Mandans. Snugly housed within the stockade, he diligently visited the two Mandan villages nearby with Toussaint Charbonneau as interpreter. The Frenchman, the old companion of Lewis and Clark, had lived here for over thirty years and was useful to the scientist. While the Prince attended Mandan dances and feasts, Carl Bodmer, a highly skilled draughtsman, busied himself with drawing and painting. Though his oil colors sometimes froze in the Dakota winter, he made a priceless pictorial record of Indian life and culture.

With patient care Maximilian's trained mind observed and recorded the life and customs of these primitive people, soon to be reduced to a remnant by the smallpox. The result was a valuable contribution to scientific knowledge. Although once more numerous, in 1833 the Mandans numbered only 900 to 1000 persons and occupied two villages, one close to Fort Clark and a second some three miles up the river. Of a copper color, Maximilian thought them "a vigorous, well-made race of people, rather above the middling stature. . . . Many of them are robust, broad-shouldered, and muscular, while others are slender and small limbed. . . . The women are pretty robust, and sometimes tall, but for the most part, they are short and broad-shouldered. . . . and some with pretty faces." Their eyes were dark brown, their hair thick and black, their teeth "strong, firm, even, and as white as ivory."

Noting that the young men had a mirror hanging from their wrists, the German scientist considered them vain and excessively fond of ornament. As with other Upper Missouri Indians they treasured handsome necklaces made of the great claws of the grizzly. The men went naked from the waist up, even in winter, except for the buffalo robe which was worn with the hair inside, save when it rained. This ample robe, tastefully fringed at the bottom and often ornamented with human hair, was elaborately painted with black, red, green, and yellow figures, showing their heroic deeds, the wounds they had received, and the horses they had stolen. A breech cloth, long leggings fastened to a belt, and moccasins of buckskin or buffalo leather completed the men's dress. The women wore a long gown of leather with open sleeves, a girdle about the waist, and the hem fringed or scalloped.

These people lived in large earth-lodges, two or three families to one dwelling. The men built the huts, made their weapons, hunted, and fought the enemies of the tribe. They also helped with the harvest. Though well-treated, the women worked very hard. On this point Maximilian wrote: "The women fetch fuel, in heavy loads, frequently from great distances, carry water, and in winter blocks of ice into the huts, cook, tan the skins, make all the clothing, lay out the plantations, perform field labor, etc."

The two villages possessed only 300 horses, some men owning several, others none. On the winter evenings the animals were brought into the huts, and fed maize. The black and white dogs worked strenuously, carrying baggage and drawing sledges in winter, a hospitable people, they were fond of tea and coffee well sweetened. Very hardy and agile, some of them bathed daily in summer and winter, and were expert swimmers. Excellent marksmen with their bows, it seemed to Maximilian that "all their senses are remarkably acute."

What sort of a person was this German that made such a thorough record of Mandan life? One who saw him at Fort Union left this reminiscence: "The Prince was at that time nearly seventy years of age (really only fifty-five), but well preserved, and able to endure considerable fatigue. He was a man of medium-height, rather slender, sans teeth, passionately fond of his pipe, unostentatious, and speaking very broken English. His favorite dress was a white slouch hat, a black velvet coat, rather rusty from long service, and probably the greasiest trousers that ever encased princely legs."

When spring came Maximilian, pretty well recovered from a severe attack of the scurvy, descended the Missouri to St. Louis and shortly sailed for Europe from New York City. The account of his travels in North America was published a few years later in German in two handsome volumes while a third was filled with Bodmer's remarkable engravings. Shortly French and English editions appeared as well. Though this was his last foreign excursion, he remained absorbed in his studies until he died in 1867, an old man of eighty-four.

All of us who love our state, who treasure the colorful, fascinating story of its past are in debt to Maximilian, Prince of Wied. This thorough, patient, honest scientist, an eager searcher for knowledge, was too, a Hero of Dakota.

FATHER GEORGE ANTONINE BELCOURT, RED RIVER PRIEST

In the early days there were two natural approaches to what is now North Dakota. One route was the Missouri River, and up its muddy waters pushed the sturdy keelboats of the fur-traders. Here came Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Manuel Lisa, Joseph La Barge, and Pierre-Jean De Smet. The other watery highway to our state reached down from the north, from Hudson's Bay to Lake Winnipeg and Red River, or up the Great Lakes, across the famed voyageurs' canoe route to Rainy Lake, on to Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg. By this toilsome trail journeyed Sieur De La Verendrye, Alexander Henry, and Father George Antonine Belcourt who labored for Christ among the Indians and half-breeds of Manitoba and North Dakota for over a quarter of a century.

Born on April 22, 1803, at Bay du Febvre, Province of Quebec, Canada, he was the son of an honest mechanic. The father, impressed by his son's intelligence, sent him to study at the college of Nicolet. Finishing the regular course, the serious, capable youth turned to theological studies while he taught the younger pupils astronomy and mathematics. He was ordained a priest on March 18, 1827. When Bishop Joseph-Norbert Provencher came from St. Boniface far to the westward on Red River, seeking a young man to carry the gospel among the Salteurs or Chippewas, the youthful Father Belcourt was chosen for the task.

On April 27, 1831, accompanied by the bishop, he started by canoe on the 2000-mile trip to St. Boniface. They must have joined a fur brigade, traveling in one of the large Montreal canoes loaded with trade goods, up the Ottawa River, across a portage to Lake Nipissing, downstream to Georgian Bay, then through the Sault Ste. Marie, and on to Grand Portage on the north shore of Lake Superior. Here the large craft were exchanged for the smaller North canoes which could be carried over the portages by only two men. These boats measuring about twenty-five feet long, were paddled by from six to ten men, sitting on the ninety pound packs of trade merchandise. The canoe men were the jolly, hard-working, French Canadian voyageurs. Let me quote a description of them from Grace Lee Nute's wholly delightful little volume, The Voyageur's Highway, Minnesota's Border Lake Land,¹ for it will suggest something of Father Belcourt's experiences as he traveled toward Red River: "The voyageur," writes Dr. Nute, "sang when he was happy, when he was in danger, when he got up in the morning, as he sat by his campfire at night, when passing through 'white water,' when at his fort, and especially while paddling. He was an effervescent being who took life easily, worked hard, took orders well, assumed little responsibility, got on admirably with the Indians, especially the native women, and gave a fine loyalty to his bourgeois. He was an excellent canoe man--better in fact, than the Indian. His ability to live in the wilderness, make canoes, erect forts, manage huskies, and procure furs made him the mainstay of the trade."

¹Published by The Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, 1941.

So they moved westward through the forest, from Grand Portage up the waterways to Rainy Lake, and on the voyageurs sweating and cursing over the portages, sixty-two of them from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg, arriving at last at St. Boniface. Here Father Belcourt spent some time, studying the language of the Salteurs, his keen mind rapidly learning the Indian tongue. Then in July, 1832, he started his first mission at Baker's Prairie, erecting a chapel and planning a colony of Salteurs, but when all save the women, children, and four warriors were away on the fall hunt, the place was suddenly attacked by a wandering band of Gros Ventre. Though the raiders were beaten off by the courageous priest and his red friends, Belcourt decided that a mission closer to St. Boniface would be more secure.

The next year, therefore, he built a mission at Baye St. Paul, located on the Assiniboine River thirty miles west of St. Boniface. Here game was abundant while the river teemed with fish, the Indians catching as many as thirty sturgeon in one day. Active and full of enthusiasm, he pushed the work of his mission. During the first year he gave religious instruction to 150 Indians and baptized 75. Besides the Salteurs, a warlike people with a passion for gaming and liquor, his parishioners were half-breeds, or bois brûlés, sturdy children of Indian mothers and French Canadian traders, leading a carefree life, gentle and generous, but given to strong drink, with a culture midway between the Indian and white.

Believing that a more settled life would assist in their religious instruction, he encouraged his charges to plant crops, and at Baye St. Paul they grew potatoes, vegetables, corn, and barley. Disapproving of this as wasted efforts, Bishop Provencher was convinced that Father Belcourt had "a passion for being ahead of his times." Although handicapped by lack of funds, only \$500 annually being at his disposal, the good priest started a school with Delle Wolin serving as school mistress. She spoke the Salteaux language perfectly, and helped to prepare the school books. Here Father Belcourt mastered this Indian tongue, and prepared a valuable grammar for it which was published in 1839, and a dictionary which was not printed until after his death. Such was his knowledge of the Salteaux language that other priests serving the Indians came to study with Father Belcourt. He devoted much time also to a traveling mission, ranging hundreds of miles to Rainy Lake on the east, going north to Lake Winnipegosis, and westward to the plains of Saskatchewan, ministering faithfully throughout this North Country to the spiritual needs of the Indians, half-breeds, and Catholic voyageurs of the fur posts. Yet through the years Baye St. Paul remained his permanent headquarters.

For this account of the famous missionary I have drawn on the excellent biographical sketch by Dr. Orin G. Libby in the Dictionary of American Biography, and on a valuable account by Miss Vernice Aldrich, "Father George Antoine Belcourt, Red River Missionary," which appeared in the North Dakota Historical Quarterly for October, 1927. This is a publication of the North Dakota Historical Society which under Superintendent Russell Reid is doing a very worthwhile work in preserving the history of the state both in its magazine,

North Dakota History, and in its excellent museum at Bismarck.²

In the course of his ministry, Father Belcourt accompanied his people on the renowned Pembina buffalo hunt, long an annual event of great importance in the Red River country. We have a letter by the missionary, giving an interesting account of the hunt in the fall of 1845.³ Encouraged by the knowledge that their priest was to accompany them, the half-breeds set out early in September for the rendezvous on Pembina River. When Father Belcourt arrived, the encampment was a beehive of activity. Some sixty tepees had been set up, while 300 horses and 100 cattle grazed on the prairie or pulled the two-wheeled carts that were collecting firewood, tepee poles, and drying frames for the expedition. On September 14 they broke camp and turned the long line of 213 carts southwestward over the limitless plain toward Devils Lake, the Sheyenne River, and Dogden Butte.

Now horsemen forged a head of the column, scouting for signs of the buffalo herds. When they returned with news of fresh tracks discovered, the hunters were in an uproar of noisy excitement at the prospect. Mounted on their ardent, excited horses, they approached the herd of cows against the wind, going slowly and carefully so as to get as close as possible before the great beasts became alarmed. If there was no cooperation in this, only those with the best horses secured any buffalo, and there followed quarrels, hatred, and all their evil consequences.

At last the signal is given, the horsemen strike spurs to their horses, and gallop into the herd. As they draw close to the buffalo they have chosen, their guns flash. It is exciting and dangerous business. While the trained horse pursues the game unguided, the hunter reloads and fires his gun, sometimes killing as many as three buffalo within a distance of 300 yards. The great danger is in falling among the fleeing beasts, when as sometimes happens an infuriated bull turns upon a horse. Another peril comes from stray bullets when the hunters fire on every side in the clouds of dust. Little wonder that fear shows plainly on their faces, for men^{die} hunting buffalo, though this year Father Belcourt sees no one seriously injured.

On the first day the party killed 169 cows, on the second 177 were brought down, and by the end of the hunt 1,776 had been slaughtered by the 55 hunters. Each day the women cut the meat into long strips about a quarter of an inch thick, and placed it on drying frames. When cured it was folded up and tied in bundles of 60 to 70 pounds. Part of the meat was beaten to a powder, well-mixed with melted fat, and placed in skin sacks. This was the famous pemmican, considered best when dried fruit and berries had been added in the making.

²Membership in the society is open to all interested persons who receive for their \$2.00 dues the four annual issues of North Dakota History. Communications should be addressed to Superintendent Russell Reid, State Historical Society, Bismarck, North Dakota.

³North Dakota Historical Collections, V, 134-54. Father Belcourt's valuable letter is printed as an appendix to John Hesketh's interesting "History of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa."

Father Belcourt went out daily with the men, and once yielding to the excitement of the chase, rode his horse into the herd and shot a buffalo. Regularly he catechised 68 children and said mass daily. When the party turned homeward on October 16 with their carts groaning with the returns of a most successful hunt, the half-breeds were thankful that the kindly priest had come with them. For his part he was convinced that much good could be done by following the hunters.

Thus by his Christian spirit Father Belcourt won the affection of these dark-skinned people, and in turn formed a warm attachment for them. He took their part in their conflict with the Hudson's Bay Company which owned the soil, governed the country, and possessed a monopoly of its trade. Counseling the bois brûlés against violence, he instead wrote a petition for them to the Queen against the greedy, arrogant Company. Alarmed by the great stir this created in England, Governor George Simpson, the leading official of the firm in Canada, set about to force the priest out of the country. His bishop, too, frowned upon him, complaining on one occasion, "A little more pliability of character would have exempted him from these mortifications, chagrin, and tears." Another criticized that Father Belcourt, while "a missionary of the highest intelligence and the most indomitable energy, passing in the Northwest for the power of genius; but . . . he lacked a certain submissiveness of spirit and judgment." Apparently Father Belcourt was a stubborn fighter. From the labors he performed it seems likely that he was also a robust, hardy man.

In the face of the attack from the Hudson's Bay Company, the priest did not surrender, but, placing himself under the Bishop of Dubuque, Iowa, shifted his base to the American side of the international boundary. Here in 1849 he built a mission at Pembina, and traveled widely over the territory on snowshoes to minister to his savage parishioners. A great flood of the Red River in the spring of 1850 caused him to move westward along the Pembina River, where he built St. Joseph mission at the base of the Pembina Mountains. This is now Walhalla, North Dakota. Here he set up the first grist-mill and saw-mill in the region to encourage the Indians to live a more settled life. Finally he resigned in 1858 after twenty-seven years of missionary labor in the Northwest, taking in his old age a parish on Prince Edward Island, and died in 1874 at the age of seventy-one.

A faithful servant of God, preaching the gospel in hardship and privation on this far frontier, Father George Antoine Belcourt well deserves our esteem and affection as a Hero of Dakota.

CRAZY HORSE, WARRIOR OF THE PLAINS

As the whites advanced into the West, they undermined the Indian way of life, destroying the game on which the red men lived. The result was bitter conflict. In our region the opening wedge was the Treaty of 1851 by which the Indians promised to leave unharmed the travelers that moved out the Oregon Trail, the Holy Road the Indians called it. As the pioneers, soldiers, gold seekers, and Mormons swarmed westward along the Platte, game became scarce, some of the Indians came in to the forts to become loafers, the white man's guns and diseases began to take a deadly toll among a primitive people. Threatened by the white flood, divided among themselves, watching the buffalo herds thin out, the Indian fought back, bravely but hopelessly. The Sioux fought for their homeland, the land bounded on the north by the Yellowstone, on the East by the Missouri, southward by the Platte, and to the westward by the Big Horn Mountains. Here wandered buffalo, deer and antelope. The streams teemed with fish, the valleys with edible roots and berries. In the wooded bottoms the Indian ponies found food and shelter. Over its buttes and plains hung the cherished memories and traditions of a brave people. It was here that Crazy Horse, a courageous warrior of the Oglalas, fought so well.

You may read his story in the excellent book by Mari Sandoz, Crazy Horse, the Strange Man of the Oglalas, published in 1942 by Alfred A. Knopf. After long and painstaking research, Mari Sandoz told the story of the Sioux with deep insight and poetic skill. The result is a volume that we of this western country should read and treasure through the years, a classic ever fresh and good.¹ Crazy Horse was born about 1842 in the Black Hills of South Dakota. His mother was a Brule, the sister of Spotted Tail, a great warrior. His father was an Oglala holy man. The Brules and Oglalas were two of the seven great camps of Teton Lakotas or Dakotas, and the Tetons were one of the seven council fires of the Sioux.

At first the boy was called Curly, for his hair was yellow and soft. His skin was light, his brown eyes sharp. Strong and hardy, he early killed his buffalo and was the first of the youths to ride a wild horse caught in the bad lands and hills. But he disliked paint, beads, and dancing, and many of the Lakota ways. As he grew up, he saw the evils that came from the whites: whisky, disease, guns and powder destroying the game, the people forgetting the old ways, going to become coffee-coolers and loafers about the forts, dependent on the white men's goods.

He witnessed the destruction when the white soldiers attacked Little Thunder's village and General William S. Harney earned the name "squaw-killer" in the newspapers. Here he saw the dead lie thick, and in Mari Sandoz's words, "children hacked and gashed through with swords, many shot and blown to pieces, women cut up too, or with their bodies torn as the earth and the rocks around them were torn by the exploding balls of the wagon guns." Seeing thus his people, he formed a resolve, cold and hard as steel, to fight the invaders of his land. Others might go in to hang about the forts for coffee, and touch the pen to treaty paper for presents, but not Crazy Horse.

¹In addition to Mari Sandoz, Crazy Horse, I have used the biographical sketch by William J. Ghent in the Dictionary of American Biography, IV, 530-51, and Patrick E. Byrne, Soldiers of the Plains, Minton, Balch & Company, 1926. This is a very valuable account of the Custer and related campaigns.

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He realized the need for unity among the Teton Lakota, and was strengthened by a vision, a dream, in which a man riding on a horse, wearing no paint and only a lone feather in his long, brown hair, charged safely through a hail of arrows and bullets, toward the enemy. The man in the dream was himself, foreshadowing the future. Thus he became a mighty warrior riding untouched through danger, killing, taking the name Crazy Horse from his proud father. Though he fought against the Crows and then against the whites, he was seldom at the victory dances, boasting of his coups. When the chiefs' society was revived with seven older men, Big Bellies, and four younger ones chosen, Crazy Horse was one of the shirt-wearers or councilors. He was always with those that drove out the whites, as in 1866 when emigrants came up the Powder River road toward the gold fields in Montana, but when others went in to council with the whites, attracted by the rich presents, the fine guns and ammunition, Crazy Horse stayed away. He led the decoys that lured the white soldiers under Fetterman to their death in December, 1866. Here his friend Lone Bear died in his arms with Crazy Horse's heart cold and black with anger.

After much hard fighting a treaty was made with the Lakotas at Fort Laramie in 1868. In a way it was victory for the Indian, for before Red Cloud would sign, the whites had to withdraw the soldiers from the forts on the Powder River, and close the Bozeman Trail. The treaty made a great reservation for the Sioux, all of what is now South Dakota west of the Missouri River. More, the lands as far south as the North Platte and west to the Big Horn Mountains should be a hunting preserve in which no white was to settle, or even pass through without Indian consent. Crazy Horse would not sign, and when Red Cloud did, he lost his influence with some of the Indians who felt that any compromise with the whites was a surrender of their birthright. There was always a division, Mari Sandoz shows, "between those who wanted to live by the hunt and those who wanted to go down and wait along the Holy Road for the white-man's goods." It was the agency Indians that got lazy, and dirty, and lousy. Crazy Horse was for "the free life of the hunt and open country."

The treaty had hardly been proclaimed than the whites began to break it. This was ever the way. Indians on the hunting grounds were declared to be "hostile"; the livestock and farming implements promised did not appear; the Black Hills swarmed with gold miners in violation of the treaty. General Philip H. Sheridan, no friend of the Indian, put precisely the causes for which the fighting was renewed: "We took away," he said, "their country and their means of support, broke up their mode of living, their habits of life, introduced disease and decay among them, and it was for this and against this that they made war."

In his late twenties Crazy Horse married Black Shawl, a quiet, strong woman. A daughter was born, and when she died of the white man's coughing sickness, the Oglala was very sad. Soon Black Shawl too was coughing in the winter mornings. Now his great warrior friend Hump and his younger brother Little Hawk were also gone, dying in war against the Crows. Crazy Horse himself was growing more reckless, fighting with a new fierceness and daring. In the battle he was always the closest, "striking and killing more than any other, yet they could never hit him."

When the runners came in January, 1876, with the stupid order that all must go into the reservation by the end of that month, or be considered "hostile," even the agency Indians did not obey, for the snow was deep and there was little food at the forts. Now the army was to subdue the "hostiles," and on the first of March, 1876, General George Crook, an earnest, intense man of action and an expert soldier, swung his troopers northward from Fort Fetterman.

in Wyoming, searching for Indians. He had a formidable force, ten full troops of cavalry and two companies of infantry, the men warmly clad in their blouses of blanketing, long buffalo boots, fur caps, and great coats of bear and buffalo skins. A pack train of 400 mules and 86 mule wagons carried their baggage.

On March 16 they sighted two Indians. To deceive the red men of their intentions, they made camp, and then a large detachment under Colonel Reynolds followed the Indian trail all night until they found in a hidden valley Crazy Horse's village of 105 lodges. The dawn attack was a surprise, and soon the troopers were burning all the Indians' possessions, clothing, buffalo robes, blankets and bedding, dried and fresh venison, all destroyed. Though greatly outnumbered, the warriors fought back courageously in the bitter cold, striking, disappearing, then hitting again. The next day they recaptured their pony herd, then with the army's morale ebbing away, Crazy Horse's warriors took away the beef herd, leaving the troopers to live on horse meat.

Through it all, writes Patrick Byrne, "ever in the forefront, appeared the grim, heroic figure of Crazy Horse---Incarnation of the Unconquerable. The terrible cold which had benumbed the white men had no terrors for him. The invading cavalcade might bring death and desolation to his women and children; but for every hardship inflicted on his people, he would take toll of the white man. In this desperate encounter the Indian leader was at his best: a living inspiration to his followers---always directing, always encouraging, and by force of example inciting them to deeds of extraordinary daring." Demoralized, Crook's column withdrew to Fort Fetterman, arriving with 66 men seriously frost-bitten. There followed charges of mismanagement, court-martials, and resignations among the officers.

In June, 1876, Crook himself, considered by old General William Tecumseh Sherman the best Indian fighter the United States army ever produced, met Crazy Horse on the Rosebud. Though there were about 1300 whites to 1250 Indians, Crook's force was so roughly handled that he fell back to his supply camp, and had no part in the Battle of the Little Big Horn eight days later. Crazy Horse and his men went on to the great encampment of Sitting Bull and helped wipe out Custer. Many sharp encounters followed. Finally with his band worn down by the unequal conflict, Crazy Horse rode in, a small, slender man without paint and a single feather in his hair, his Winchester in a scabbard at his knee, and surrendered at the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska in May 1877. Chanting the peace song of the Lakotas as they rode, his 1100 followers approached the fort, then quietly dismounted and gave up their horses and arms, a bitter thing. Here on September 5, when the military authorities, deceived by the jealous lies of agency Indians, attempted to arrest Crazy Horse, he resisted desperately and died from his wounds that night. Next day his parents buried him out on the prairie where for the Indian dead the warrior-winds sing an everlasting requiem.

Captain John G. Bourke who watched Crazy Horse surrender at Red Cloud wrote: "I saw before me a man who looked quite young, not over thirty years old, five feet eight inches tall, lithe and sinewy and with a scar in the face. The expression of his countenance was one of quiet dignity, but morose, dogged, tenacious and melancholy. . . . All Indians gave him a high reputation for courage and generosity. In advancing upon an enemy, none of his warriors were allowed to pass him. He had made hundreds of friends by his charity towards the poor, as it was a point of honor with him never to keep anything for himself excepting weapons of war."²

Quiet, modest, and brave, devoted to the welfare of his people, a superb leader in a hopeless conflict between two civilizations, let us today salute Crazy Horse, the Oglala, as a Hero of Dakota.

²Byrne, Soldiers of the Plains 166-67

VIII

GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER, SOLDIER

This is the story of a dashing cavalry officer who made a brilliant record in the Civil War, fought Indians on the border, and met his death in an unforgettable disaster on the Little Big Horn. The very book titles suggest its absorbing interest. There is Fred Dustin's Custer Tragedy and Patrick Byrne's Soldiers of the Plains. To Frederic Van de Water our subject was the Glory-Hunter, but to Elizabeth Custer, his wife, he was the Boy General. Mrs. Custer has also recalled the General's life in Dakota in her delightful but none too accurate Boots and Saddles.¹ These are but samples of the enormous Custer literature whose bulk testifies to the perennial attraction of the story.

Born at New Rumley, Ohio, in 1839, George Armstrong Custer was the son of a blacksmith and farmer. His paternal great-grandfather, however, had been a Hessian officer in the American Revolution, and young George's ambition was to be a soldier. In 1857 he entered West Point. Here, a big, jolly boy, full of mischief, he was a careless student, and graduated at the bottom of his class of thirty-four.

When the Civil War began, the cadet was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to a cavalry regiment. Serving brilliantly, he rose like a rocket. By the summer of 1863 he was a brigadier-general, a year later a brevet major-general of volunteers and Sheridan's most trusted lieutenant. His operations were noted for their energy and dash, and their almost unvarying success. He won his greatest glory in the pursuit of Lee in April, 1865. "His division," wrote William J. Ghent, "held the van, and day and night, with little pause for rest or food, it kept relentlessly at its task, striking here and there, crumpling up the lines of defense and capturing prisoners, wagons, and guns until on the morning of April 9 it threw itself across Gordon's front and made further resistance useless. It was to Custer that the Confederate flag of truce, a crash towel, was brought, and it was to him that it afterward came as a present from Sheridan, along with the present to his wife of the small table on which Grant had written the terms of surrender." "I know of no one," wrote Sheridan, "whose efforts have contributed more to this happy result than those of Custer."

With the end of the war and the reduction of the forces, he was knocked down to captain in the regular army. Peace must have been an anti-climax for this gallant cavalry officer. In July 1866, however, Congress authorized the organization of the Seventh Cavalry Regiment, and the erstwhile Boy General, now promoted to lieutenant-colonel, joined the new outfit at Fort Riley, Kansas, early in 1867. With the colonel absent, Custer was in actual command until his death on the Little Big Horn.

¹I have drawn on material from Fred Dustin, The Custer Tragedy (Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1939); Patrick E. Byrne, Soldiers of the Plains (Mintor, Balch & Co., N. Y., 1926); Elizabeth B. Custer, Boots and Saddles, or Life in Dakota with General Custer (Harper & Brothers, 1913); W. J. Ghent, "George Armstrong Custer," Dictionary of American Biography, V, 7-9.

After a summer campaign against the Indians in Kansas and Nebraska, he was charged with leaving his command without permission and ordering deserters shot without trial. The court-martial found him guilty and suspended him without pay from rank and command for one year. In the fall of 1868 he returned to the Seventh and won the Battle of the Washita, a night attack upon a sleeping village of Cheyennes in which many women and children were killed. This made Custer's reputation as an Indian fighter. Now the regiment was scattered on service in the South against the Klan until 1873 when it was reunited and sent out to Dakota Territory. On the long march from Yankton to Bismarck, Mrs. Custer rode at the head of the column beside her sturdy blonde husband, sharing the excitement and hardships of the journey.

That summer, while Fort Abraham Lincoln was built for it across from Bismarck, the regiment escorted the surveyors of the Northern Pacific Railroad along the Yellowstone River into Montana. Here General David S. Stanley, commander of the expedition, punished General Custer for insubordination by making him ride at the rear of his regiment for two or three days. At this time Steamboat Captain Joseph LaBarge, carrying supplies for the party, made an interesting comparison: "Custer seemed to me to be generally unpopular; that is, I rarely heard him spoken well of. Stanley, on the other hand, always appeared to be a gentleman of rare qualities, one who never forgot to treat a civilian as a man----- something many officers were little disposed to do." In 1874 Custer marched the regiment to the Black Hills, discovered gold, and started the rush of miners to that region. Two years later came the campaign against Sitting Bull.

Very strong and active, the young officer weighed one hundred and seventy pounds, and stood nearly six feet in height. His eyes were blue, his wavy hair golden. A long, tawny mustache graced his florid face, burned from the sun. He developed a flair for dress. Though at first slouchy and unkempt, with his promotion to high rank he put on a showy uniform of olive-gray corduroy or velveteen, richly trimmed with gold braid and set off with a cavalier hat and a long scarlet necktie. In Dakota Territory, Mrs. Custer tells us, he sometimes wore "troop boots reaching to his knees, buckskin breeches fringed on the sides, a dark navy blue shirt with a broad collar, (and) a red necktie....." He would pay \$40 for a pair of boots and loved to make a splendid appearance at review. It was not remarkable that critics considered him vain.

Full of high spirits, fond of ladies' company, he was deeply devoted to his wife, writing her when absent long letters of thirty pages or more, feasting on onions the while. Except when hunting or on duty he preferred to stay at the house with Mrs. Custer, playing billiards or reading, rather than seek amusement at the sutler's where other officers went to drink and play cards. In an age when drunkenness was the great vice of the army, Custer did not use liquor or tobacco. In part to escape the tedium of garrison life, in part also for the \$100 fee and the flattering recognition, the lieutenant-colonel wrote articles for the Galaxy, a periodical. These appeared later in book form under the title, Life of the Plains, a vivid account of his experiences which made enemies by its critical references to his fellow officers.

Riding with easy grace, he loved horses, and kept a pack of about forty stag-hounds and fox-hounds, for hunting was one of the chief diversions at Fort Abraham Lincoln. On the Yellowstone expedition of 1873 he learned taxidermy and his library was adorned with trophies of the chase. Here looked down from the walls the heads of buffalo, antelope, deer, and Custer's first grizzly with open jaws and great fang-like teeth. Before the fireplace was spread the immense skin of a grizzly bear; over the camp-chairs were thrown beaver and mountain lion pelts. In one corner

a stand for arms held a collection of pistols, hunting knives, Winchester and Springfield rifles, shot-guns and carbines, while from the antlers above hung sabres, spurs, riding whips, field-glasses, the map-case, and the great compass used on marches.

In the spring of 1876 a campaign was planned against the hostile Sioux. General George Crook, commanding the Department of the Platte, would come up from the south, and General Alfred Terry, in charge of the Department of Dakota, would move westward into Montana, where the hostiles ranged. While these plans were maturing, Custer went to Washington and testified before the Clymer Committee against Secretary of War William W. Belknap. Angered by Custer's testimony and his intimate association with newspaper enemies of the administration, President Ulysses S. Grant and General William T. Sherman decided that he should not be permitted to accompany his regiment on the projected expedition. Only General Terry's request secured permission for Custer to go along. Stinging from this disgrace, Custer told another officer that at the first opportunity he would cut "loose from Terry and make his operations independent of him during the summer." He was hungry for glory.

Terry's command, three companies of infantry, a platoon of Gatling guns, and the Seventh Cavalry, left Fort Abraham Lincoln on May 17, 1876. On June 8th it reached the Yellowstone River at the mouth of the Powder. Then Major Marcus A. Reno took six troops of the Seventh on a scout up the Powder, across to the Rosebud, and down that stream to its mouth. Meanwhile Terry moved his main force up the Yellowstone to meet Colonel John Gibbon bringing a column of infantry and cavalry from Fort Ellis, Montana. Coming in from his scout Major Reno reported a large, fresh Indian trail, indicating a village of 380 lodges, leading up the Rosebud and then westward, showing that the Indians were camped on the Little Big Horn. Terry ordered Custer with the Seventh in pursuit up the Rosebud. This column was to go southward as far as the headwaters of the Tongue, and then turn toward the Little Big Horn, while Gibbon and Terry would march to the mouth of the Big Horn and up it to the fork of the Little Big Horn. The Indians would be caught in a pincher movement between the cooperating forces. That was the plan.

About noon, June 22nd, the bugles sounded "boots and saddles," and Custer rode up to Terry and Gibbon to watch the cavalry swing out on its march. First came a band of buglers playing, then the troopers, presenting a splendid appearance on their fine horses, the little guidons fluttering gaily in the breeze. Custer was proud of his men as the officers sat on their horses, watching the regiment pass by as in a review. This was the life he loved. As they bade farewell, Gibbon called that Custer should not be greedy, a significant anticipation of coming events.

On June 24th Custer came to a point where the Indian trail turned westward toward the Little Big Horn. Instead of continuing southward according to the plan and his orders, he turned and followed the Indian trail. An excellent judge of pace, he knew that by this course he would come in contact with the Indians a day or two before Gibbon and Terry could arrive. The conclusion was obvious. He did not intend that the glory of the fight should go to others. It was to be a Custer victory.

Now he pressed forward relentlessly. On the 24th the command had moved out on the march at 5 A. M. and did not go into camp until 9 P. M. After a brief rest they went on in the night until 2 A. M., when the exhausted men and horses stopped for a little sleep. Small wonder that some of the troopers thought Custer cared more for his dogs than he did for his men. At 8 A. M. the march was resumed and except for a brief halt at 10:30 A. M., went on until the battle was fought. Except for six hours of rest the men had been in the saddle practically 34 hours. For many hours they had had nothing to eat and the horses had not been watered for 18 hours.

Although his scouts repeatedly warned him that they would find more Indians than Custer's 555 men could handle, he was only concerned that his foe might get away. Holding the enemy cheaply, he divided his command into three battalions, and moved toward battle without any plan. Captain Benteen with three troops was ordered to scout some high bluffs five miles to the left. Now Major Reno's battalion crossed the Little Big Horn, and pressed toward the great Indian encampment, while the remaining five troops of the command under Custer moved down the stream toward the north end of the village. Shortly Reno, overwhelmed by a savage horde of warriors, retreated back across the river and entrenched on some bluffs where he was joined by Benteen and somehow managed to hold out until Terry came two days later. With Reno retreating some portion of the estimated 2500 Indians turned on Custer, and, led with terrible effectiveness by Crazy Horse and Gall, ambushed his command as it approached the river by a ravine a few miles downstream. It was a complete disaster. Everyone of the 205 men under him lost his life in a short, desperate fight. That was the end.

What shall we say of Custer? Strong and hardy, a courageous, dashing figure with much real military ability, George Armstrong Custer loved praise too well. He was a glory-hunter, and the glory-trail led straight to the tragedy of the Little Big Horn.

JAY COOKE, BANKER TO THE NORTHERN PACIFIC

The railroads were the greatest single factor in the settlement of the West. Here, on these broad plains, it was the railroad that brought in the pioneer farmer and carried to market his grain and stock. These western roads were built with difficulty, for they came before settlement created traffic. To remedy this handicap and to turn their vast land-grants into funds to meet their outlays, they busied themselves with the peopling of their domain. They flooded the Old World with literature describing the rich opportunities of the West, met the immigrants' ships at New York, helping the newcomers on their way, and finally sold them fertile farms on easy terms. Thus in the eighteen-seventies and eighties the Great West was rapidly settled by railroad enterprise.

In North Dakota the first road to struggle with these problems and to perform such services was the Northern Pacific. The man most responsible for its early construction was Jay Cooke, a Philadelphia banker. His interesting story has been told with deep insight, literary skill, and sound scholarship by Henrietta M. Larson in the biography, Jay Cooke, Private Banker, published by Harvard University Press in 1936. My talk today is drawn from this excellent volume, a valuable contribution to business history and the record of the Northwest.

Born on August 10, 1821, in Sandusky, Ohio, Jay Cooke was the second son of a pioneer lawyer and congressman who had descended from Puritan farmers and tradesmen of early Massachusetts. His father enjoyed an extensive law practice and provided a pleasant, stimulating home, warmly affectionate and somewhat idealistic in spirit. A healthy lad with an abundance of energy, young Jay was of medium height, with light hair and blue eyes. He possessed a keen mind, was thoughtful, self-reliant, and easily won friends. He attended school regularly until he was fourteen, and then, although both his brothers went away to school, became a clerk in a dry goods, grocery, and hardware store at a salary of \$250 a year.

The next summer he went to work for a merchant in St. Louis, gaining new experiences in this rough, lively, frontier river town. When his St. Louis employer failed in the Panic of 1837, Jay, still only sixteen, went to seek his fortune in Philadelphia, then the second most important center of commerce and finance in the United States. Here he worked first for a packet firm, and then in 1839 became a clerk in the commercial and investment banking house of E. W. Clark & Company.

He possessed robust health, strong ambition, and considerable business experience for his age. Optimistic, self-confident, with a pleasing manner and a winsome, intelligent expression, the young bank clerk made his way upward quickly. He learned all about banking and soon was writing as an extra job a "money article" for the Philadelphia Daily Chronicle. His leisure he spent taking long walks about the historic old city, going to plays, and practicing on the flute. Although he liked to spend his money and dress well, every Sunday he faithfully attended church. In January 1843, Jay Cooke, now twenty-one, became a partner of E. W. Clark & Company, and was given an one-eighth share of the profits, a significant recognition of his ability, for he contributed no capital to the concern.

When the Clark firm collapsed in the Panic of 1857, Cooke withdrew, and after an interval established his own house, Jay Cooke & Co., in Philadelphia on January 1, 1861. His partner in this venture was William Moorehead, his brother-in-law. When the United States Treasury had great difficulty selling government bonds at the beginning of the Civil War, Cooke took hold. With a contract as special agent of the Treasury, he put on a tremendous publicity campaign, securing the friendly cooperation of the newspapers and advertising extensively, and sold the bonds to hundreds of thousands of investors, large and small. This was a new thing in the marketing of securities, and a most significant contribution to the winning of the war. It was the first of the great bond drives, the sort of campaign with which we are all familiar from World War II.

Cooke's effort succeeded because of his great energy, physical and emotional as well as mental, his ability to win supporters by his integrity, his kind and sympathetic nature, his enthusiasm and optimism. His positive outlook was founded on an abundant self-confidence and a steady faith in the justice of God and his own rightness with God. Jay Cooke gained immense power from the certainty and confidence that his faith gave him.

While the firm made money from the bond sales, its most striking reward was in prestige. Jay Cooke's name was known everywhere. He had become the best known American banker at home and abroad. The concern, however, had no capital strictly speaking, but drew on the assets of its partners which were not large, not above \$2,000,000 at the close of the war. It expanded so that there were finally four interwoven partnerships: the original Philadelphia house, a Washington branch established during the war to maintain contact with the Treasury, a New York house started in 1866 and managed by Harris C. Fahnestock, and finally a London House, set up in 1870, and run by Hugh McCulloch, formerly Secretary of the Treasury.

A man of property, Jay Cooke also had a strong sense of social responsibility, and set aside one-tenth of his firm's profits for charities. Deeply religious, he taught a Sunday School class, and said family prayers every morning. While he did not have a cultivated intellect, caring little for books or the stimulus of travel, he had married at twenty-three and was devoted to his family. With four children the Cooke home was a place of cheer, good will, and hospitality. At the end of the war he built a fifty-room mansion, Ogontz, which cost over a million dollars and was one of the costliest and best known homes in the United States of that day. Here he entertained generously when he was not fishing at his summer house on Lake Erie.

After the war Cooke's business in government bonds slackened, and in 1869 he was ready to listen when the promoters of the Northern Pacific approached him. This railroad, to run from Duluth to Puget Sound, had been chartered by Congress in 1864 with a fifty-million acre land-grant, but its officials had never been able to raise the funds to begin construction. Although his partners were reluctant, an investigation aroused Cooke's enthusiasm for this great project, a 2000-mile railroad reaching half way across the continent. On January 1, 1870, he signed a contract to sell \$100,000,000 of Northern Pacific bonds at face value for a twelve per cent commission. Secured by a first mortgage on the railroad, its land and other property, the bonds were to bear 7.3% interest, payable in gold. Within thirty days Cooke was to have \$5,000,000 to begin construction, but there was no time-limit set on the sale of the remainder. The laying of track was to proceed only as the bonds were sold; Cooke need not advance in anticipation of sales funds in excess of \$500,000; and the immediate objective was the Red River of the North, not the Pacific Ocean.

While surveys got under way, Cooke had difficulty in selling the first \$5,000,000 worth of bonds, though generous bonuses of stock went to the purchasers. To Cooke's bitter disappointment no large capitalist or prominent railroad man came in, and no help was secured from European investors. He felt that the land-grant was the great hope of the undertaking. The railroad was to be given 23,000 acres of government land for each mile of track laid down, getting the title as it completed each twenty-five mile section. Cooke hoped that the sale of the lands would bring in funds to redeem the bonds, and that the settlement of the country would build up traffic for the railroad. He planned an active campaign to advertise Northern Pacific lands in Europe and to assist immigrants to come to the Northwest.

In 1871 the banker began the public sale of Northern Pacific bonds. Filling the newspapers with advertisements, giving dinners to newspaper men, preparing many pamphlets, and books on the resources of the "Fertile Belt" as he called the Northern Pacific country, even enlisting the pen of Vice-President Schuyler Colfax he spent \$350,000 within a year and a half to convince the public that Northern Pacific was a safe and profitable investment. The results were extremely

disappointing. With no prospect that the road would soon be a paying concern, the bonds sold very slowly. Moreover, the disposal of the land-grant and the settlement of the country lagged. Tired, saddened by the death of his wife, Cooke wrote at the end of 1871 that he "would not again undertake such a job for all the money in the world."

Nevertheless the road was making progress. Starting from Duluth in 1870, it reached the Red River at Fargo by the end of 1871, and was to the Missouri River, at Bismarck, by June 1873, some 450 miles to the westward. With an additional 150 miles constructed on the Pacific coast, the Northern Pacific had received ten million acres of land from the government. Now, too, settlers, singly and in colonies, were taking up land along its line in Minnesota. It was, however, built in a most extravagant and inefficient fashion. Further, without consulting Cooke, President J. Gregory Smith and the other officials of the road repeatedly entered into large contracts, nonchalantly disregarding Cooke's protests, which the treasurer called "the usual growl from Philadelphia."

Now Fahnestock, the New York partner of Cooke, bitterly condemned the weakness of the Northern Pacific leadership, and declared that the Cooke publicity did not tell the truth about the road, maintaining as it did that an extravagant management was economical, that valueless lands were superior, that immigrants were pouring in when little had been accomplished in that way. Unquestionably Cooke had made a serious mistake in allying himself with a concern whose management was of a dubious character, but now it was too late to draw back. Indeed, Cooke could not refuse to pay the bills for the road, for then the whole project would collapse. Furthermore, his prestige was at stake. He had recommended Northern Pacific bonds so strongly that he could not confess failure or bad judgment to those who had purchased \$30,000,000 of N. P. bonds on his word. The overdrafts grew and grew as business conditions generally went to pieces. By August, 1873, Jay Cooke & Co. had over \$5,000,000 tied up in the enterprise. The strain was too great. On September 18, with its cash exhausted, the great banking house closed its doors, bankrupt, and a panic swept over Wall Street. For the first time in its history the New York Stock Exchange stopped trading in securities.

Yet, in spite of the failure, the losses to his depositors and the N. P. bondholders, Jay Cooke had contributed substantially to the building of North Dakota and the West, for after its bankruptcy in 1873, the Northern Pacific with better times secured new capital and built on the Puget Sound by 1883 becoming a powerful influence in the settlement of the Northwest. Cooke himself made another substantial fortune and recovered his palatial home, Ogontz, and many other properties that he had lost in the crash. Finally in 1905 he died, an old man of eighty-three, cheerful and optimistic to the end.

MARY DODGE WOODWARD: BONANZA FARMER

The failure of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1873 brought stagnation to the Red River Valley, for people believed that Northern Pacific lands, the security for its bonds, were worthless. To prove this untrue some railroad officials began the famous bonanza farms of the Red River country. In 1875 George W. Cass, president of Northern Pacific, and Benjamin P. Cheney, a director, each purchased eight sections some eighteen miles west of Fargo from the land department of the road. Now Oliver Dalrymple, a big farmer from the Minnesota wheat country, was engaged to manage the property. In 1876 he had two sections ready for the first crop. His success, widely advertised, encouraged others.

The Grandins of Pennsylvania exchanged Northern Pacific securities, selling for a few cents on the dollar, for ninety-eight or ninety-nine sections in Traill and northern Cass counties. In 1877 Dalrymple, also retained to manage part of the Grandin holding, put in seven sections on the Cass and Cheney farms, and about 2600 acres for the Grandins. Each year more land was cropped and the factory system of large-scale farming with hundreds of men, horses, and machines was well under way. In 1877 a visitor to one division of the Grandin property counted 79 plows, 55 harrows, 24 seeders, 28 self-binding harvesters, 6 steam threshers, and 40 wagons. He and the nation were startled by the size of operations where a farm had five thousand acres in crops, employed 235 men at harvest time, and used over 150 horses to gather the grain. By 1880 there were eighty-two farms of over a thousand acres in the Valley of the Red River of the North. The whole nation was watching the new experiment in agriculture and settlers were pouring into Dakota Territory.

Life on a bonanza farm in Dakota is portrayed in The Checkered Years, the diary of Mary Dodge Woodward. Edited by her granddaughter, Mary Boynton Cowdrey, The Checkered Years was published in 1936 by the Caxton Printers of Caldwell, Idaho. A little, old lady, sensitive to beauty, a bit timid, shivering oft times from the cold of the windswept prairies, Mary Dodge Woodward put down in her diary in crisp, vivid language her life on a Cass county farm in the eighteen-eighties. It is a readable and valuable record, and after I tell you a little of how she came to Dakota Territory, I shall try to describe the life captured in its pages.

Born in Vermont of Puritan ancestors in 1826, Mary Dodge Woodward at thirty-one moved westward to Wisconsin with her husband and children. Then, in the fall of 1882, her husband long dead, she came with her three unmarried children to the Dodge farm some eight miles west of Fargo. There was in the family circle Walter Woodward, thirty, slender, and capable, Katie, small, dainty, and twenty-three, and Fred, just eighteen and full of fun. Walter Woodward was to manage the farm for its owner, Daniel Dodge, a wealthy cousin of Mary's and a resident of New York State, who had purchased it with Northern Pacific securities for about fifteen cents an acre, considering the low price of the securities on the stock exchange.

¹The best account of agriculture in eastern North Dakota is found in John Lee Coulter, "Industrial History of the Valley of the Red River of the North," in North Dakota Historical Society Collections, III, 529-672. These Collections are the most valuable source on North Dakota History.

When the Woodward's arrived, the farm had some buildings and gradually acquired more. Presently there was a story-and-a-half house snugly built, a horse barn, a large granary, and a cow barn, as well as a long shed for machinery, all painted red with white trimmings. Mrs. Woodward appreciated the soft water from the cistern when she washed the big pile of sheets and pillow cases from the granary where the farm hands slept in the summer. The Woodward's, finding not a tree or shrub on the place, brought box elders from the Sheyenne River.

The farm stock consisted of fifteen to twenty horses, two cows and a few pigs. Mrs. Woodward cherished the companionship of the two dogs, Jack and Roxy, but was worried by her inability to raise kittens. From the farms fifteen hundred acres they harvested about twelve thousand bushels of wheat and three or four thousand bushels of oats. In 1886 they dug one hundred and seventy-five bushels of potatoes, and the next year six hundred bushels. The water supply was a serious problem. When the two wells on the place in 1882 failed to furnish enough water at threshing time, another was put down in 1884, and a fourth dug eighty feet deep in 1886. This last effort was successful, for the well soon filled to a depth of forty feet and supplied all needs. Danial Dodge, the owner, spent the summer of 1886 on the place, and with a mania for building, made many improvements. An addition was built to the house, a shop constructed for a forge, a pig pen and ice-house put up. Ice was brought from the Sheyenne River in the winter.

In Dakota as elsewhere farm life followed the rhythm of the seasons. When the winter broke in April the country, all black, sticky mud, became alive with elated men and horses. Then Walter Woodward called his crew at dawn, and by six, having fed the horses, they were ready for breakfast. Soon they were in the fields seeding, the men covering nineteen or twenty miles a day with the machines. To the old lady from Wisconsin it seemed as though the "Dakota farmers [were] more energetic than the farmers down home. They rush things here." ²

The fat, rich soil would grow anything, but the settlers concentrated on wheat. It was the land of No. 1 hard. Soon the fields were "a lovely green," and Cass county, in Mrs. Woodward's words, "one vast ocean of wheat." She evidently enjoyed "the hurry and drive" of the busy season; winter with its endless blizzards and biting cold was another matter. After seeding came plowing for summer fallow, and in rainy weather the men might be put to pulling mustard, disagreeable work that they disliked. By the end of August the countryside teemed with threshing machines, and the diarist wrote, "I could see eight this morning, each with a crew of from twenty to thirty men which makes lively times." In mid-September she stood with her telescope on the granary steps and counted twenty threshing outfits. The Dodge farm looked picturesque when the threshing crew arrived with their tents and cook house, while at night the prairie was illuminated with the burning straw. In 1884 it cost Walter Woodward fifteen cents a bushel to have the grain threshed.

²All quoted material is from Mary Dodge Woodward's diary in The Checkered Years.

At this rush season Mrs. Woodward had help from Katie and a hired girl, often a Norwegian lass fresh from the Old Country who could speak little or no English. Even with this assistance she was nearly beside herself getting dinner for thirteen men, besides carpenters and tinnors . . . I baked seventeen loaves of bread today," she wrote on August 11, 1885, "making seventy-four loaves since last Sunday, not to mention twenty-one pies, and puddings, cakes, and doughnuts." Fatiguing as it was, she gloried in it, commenting to her diary, "Things look like business here with seven self-binders at work on this home section. The twine to bind our grain will cost three hundred dollars this year." Again she wrote, "Any time during the past week we could see a hundred reapers with the attendant shockers . . . Everybody is rustling, which is what I like."

In August, 1887, there were thirty-two men and fifteen teams, some of them hired, on the Dodge farm, with a cookstove set up in the blacksmith shop and a male cook to feed part of the crew. That fall a fiddler among the workmen amused the boys after supper, and they danced in the yard. Then some would play baseball and others horseshoes. With only twenty beds available, some of the men had to sleep in the barn. With harvesting and threshing finished, many of the men left the country, while the rest settled down to fall plowing. Soon the plowmen would go, leaving only one or two to care for the stock. "There is," remarked the diarist, "nothing much for men to do in Dakota in winter."

That was the hard season, though their house was the warmest in the neighborhood, and the big coal stove shed its generous warmth about. Now the mercury dropped to twenty below, which, Mrs. Woodward thought, was "too cold to work and almost too cold to live. But the sun nearly always shines in Dakota and although the days are cold they are not gloomy." Colder and colder it grew, thirty below, even forty, and finally the mercury crawled into the bulb of their thermometer and the weather station at Moorehead reported forty-eight degrees below zero in January, 1887! Often the men came in with frozen spots on their checks or with frozen ears, and even the dog and cat were frostbitten. In such weather the old lady bundled up in hood, shawl, and mittens" to get breakfast, and brought the food from the frigid kitchen into the warm sitting room to eat.

Now blizzard followed blizzard and the drifts piled high. Always there were the terrible stories of people lost in the snow, freezing to death or losing hands and feet. Every time Walter, wrapped in his big buffalo coat, went to Fargo for mail, books, and supplies, the old lady worried until he returned. During these dreary months Mrs. Woodward's house plants with their gay blossoms were a great comfort to her, especially a huge geranium, and she guarded them carefully from the cold. Reading, however, was the Woodward's' chief recreation in the winter, and they sat about the friendly stove by the hour with newspapers, books, and magazines. Many of the titles they read are forgotten now, but a few are still familiar. Walter liked both Harpers Weekly and Harpers Monthly, Fred subscribed to the racy Police Gazette, while they all devoured Dickens' novels. Sometimes the girls invited in some of the farm hands and made molasses candy. It was a happy, congenial family, devoted to each other. Yet it became lonesome, isolated as they were by the cold and snow. The wind whining ceaselessly outside got on the old lady's nerves, and one January,

after a long storm, she decided, "There is no romance about this country. It is just plain business and No. 1 hard at that."

With the low price of wheat in the late eighties it was not a very profitable business, and Daniel Dodge, disappointed in his returns, decided to stop operating his Dakota farm. Thus in the spring of 1889 the Woodward's returned to their Wisconsin home. Here, gradually failing, Mary Dodge Woodward died on Christmas day, 1890, her children about her. A small, wiry person, she appreciated the beauties of the Dakota prairie, the wide sweep of the country, and the pulsing life of its rapid growth. Loyal to her new home, when a migratory farm-hand decided it was a "God-forsaken country," she snapped that with Cass county "covered with No. 1 hard wheat and the wayside all abloom, with goldenrod and asters," it did not seem so to her. May her loyalty nourish ours as we read in The Checkered Years her faithful record of life on a bonanza farm in Dakota. Here on these pages that olden time comes alive once more, and we see again the eternal struggle of man against the elements enacted on the broad prairies that are our home.

